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TABLE OF CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

Physical Aspects.

	PAGE.
AREA—Population—Origin of name—Boundaries—Natural divisions—Geological theories about the Madhupur jungle—Scenery—River system—Date of the change in the course of the Brahmaputra—Botany—Fruit trees—Fauna—Big game—Game birds—Small birds—Fish—Temperature and rainfall 1—21

CHAPTER II.

History.

BOUNDARIES OF THE BUDDHIST KINGDOMS—First inroads of the Muhammadans—Isā Khān—Shaistā Khān—The Nāzims—The Company—The Sanyasies. ARCHAEOLOGY, Garh Jaripa, Atia, Agarasindur, Durmut, Kishorganj, (Temple of Lakshmi Narayan) 22—33
---	----------------

CHAPTER III.

The People.

GROWTH OF THE POPULATION—Emigrants—Muhammadan castes and sects—Saint worship—Hindu castes—Aboriginal tribes—Language—Character of the agricultural population 34—43
---	-------------------------

CHAPTER IV.

Public Health.

DEATH-RATE—Epidemic diseases—Skin diseases—Goitre—Water-supply—Dispensaries 44—47
---	---

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

CHAPTER V.**Agriculture.**

	PAGE.
AREA UNDER CULTIVATION—Soils—Rice (<i>āman, āus, boro</i>)—Jute— Winter crops—Vegetables—Manuring— Implements of agriculture —Cattle—Forests 48—57	

CHAPTER VI.**Natural Calamities and Irrigation.**

EARTHQUAKES—Floods—The irrigation of <i>boro</i> fields 58—60	
--	--

CHAPTER VII.**Rents, Wages and Prices.**

THE LANDLORD CLASS—The Middle class—The Agricultural class—Rate of rent—Zamindari management—Prices—The material condition of the ryots—Produce rents—The budgets of typical families ... 61—73	
---	--

CHAPTER VIII.**Occupations and Trades.**

THE DECAY OF INDIGO—Oil manufacture—Cotton—Weaving—Black- smiths—Carpenters and boat building—Potters—Pearl fishing. Fisheries (profits— instruments—methods). Agricultural labourers —Häts—Mēlas 74—90	
--	--

CHAPTER IX.**Communications.**

ROADS IN THE 18TH CENTURY—Railways—Roads in the Tangail sub- division—Jamalpur—Sadar—Netrakona—Kishorganj—Ferries— Rest-houses 91—98	
---	--

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

ix

CHAPTER X.

Land Revenue.

	PAGE.
MUGHAL SETTLEMENTS—English Settlements—Incidence of the Land Revenue—Permanently-settled estates—Temporarily-settled estates—Government estates—Revenue-free estates—Subordinate tenures—The Patiladaha jotes—Relations of landlords and tenants—The Tenancy Act—Local units of land measurements—Early Surveys—The District Settlement—Collectorate Records .....	... 99—112

CHAPTER XI.

General Administration.

EARLY CHANGES IN JURISDICTION—The Garo Hill boundary—Subdivisions—Thanas—Proposed partitions—Crime—Revenue—Police—Village police—Jails—The Post Office 113—128
--	-------------

CHAPTER XII.

Local Self-Government.

DISTRICT BOARD—Local Boards—Municipalities 129—136
--	-------------

CHAPTER XIII.

Education.

INDIGENOUS HINDU AND MUHAMMADAN SCHOOLS—English Schools—Colleges—Newspapers 137—141
---	-------------

CHAPTER XIV.

Gazetteer.

(In alphabetical order.)

HISTORY OF THE IMPORTANT PARGANAS—Alapsingh—Atia—Joanshāhi—Kāgmāri—Khāliajuri—Mymensingh and Jafarshahi—Pukhuria—Sherpur—Susung—Tappe Hazrādi. Mymensingh Town and the Subdivisional head-quarters—Other important bazars and villages 142—170
--	-------------

INDEX 170—178
-------------	-------------

*Dariel Barac Mukerji
College Row, Calcutta*

GAZETTEER OF THE MYMENSINGH DISTRICT.

CHAPTER I.

PHYSICAL ASPECTS.

THE district of Mymensingh, the largest district in the Presidency of Bengal, lies between $23^{\circ} 58'$ and $25^{\circ} 25'$ north latitude, and between $89^{\circ} 49'$ and $91^{\circ} 19'$ east longitude. Taking into account both the area, 6,300 square miles, and the population, 4,526,422, it may well claim to be the largest district in India.

The name is derived from the Mymensingh pargana, which, in the time of Akbar, was in the possession of Momin Shah. Tradition says that the reason the Company Collectorate took the name of Mymensingh in preference to that of any of the many other parganas comprised in it was that the zamindars of Mymensingh agreed to pay double the revenue of Alâpsingh, if the zillah was called after their pargana. As a matter of fact the revenue of Mymensingh is double the revenue of Alâpsingh, though the latter pargana is larger in area and certainly not less valuable. It is probable, however, that the choice of name was accidental, in that Mymensingh was the first of the parganas in the list "Mymensingh Pargana Digar," which were separated from Dacca under a Collector of their own in 1787.

Mymensingh is bounded by no less than eight districts, the Gâro Hills, Dhubri, Rangpur, Bogra, Pâbna, Dacca, Tippera and Sylhet. On the west the district is bounded by the main channel of the Brâhmaputra, known as the Jamuna. On the north it is bounded by the Gâro Hills, and on the east by Sylhet and Tippera. For the most part the boundary is marked by small streams, and then towards the south by the Meghna. Bhairab Bazar, where the old channel of the Brâhmaputra meets the Meghna, is in the extreme south-east corner of the district. On the south the boundary is artificial. From the

Jamuna it passes along the northern limits of the Mānikganj subdivision of Dacca through the Madhupur Jungle to Kaorāid. It then runs along the Bunkheroo up to Nayanbazar and from there along the old Brāhmaputra to Bhairab Bazar.

Configura-
tion. The district lies almost in the centre of the Ganges-Brāhmaputra-Meghna delta, which is now said to extend from Cooch Behar and Sylhet in the north to the Sundarbans in the south. At some period in geological history the ocean came up to the foot of the Himalayas and those smaller ranges, the Gāro and Khāsia Hills, which still separate Assam from Bengal. The mountain streams derived from their precipitous descent a force and energy which enabled them to carry away large quantities of rock and at the same time to grind them into fine sand. The older alluvion of the Bengal delta is based on the rock materials which the action of the sun and the ice corroded from the peaks of the Himalayas. Some of this older alluvion still peeps to the surface in the large tract of hard red soil stretching from Dacca town to Jamālpur in the Mymensingh district, which is known as the Madhupur Jungle. Other places where the older alluvion is found are the Barind area in Rājshāhi, Bogra, Dinājpur and Rangpur, where the soil is, however, of a deep yellow rather than a red colour, and in a narrow belt a few miles west of Comilla. In his lecture before the Asiatic Society on February 10th, 1910, Mr. LaTouche ascribes the formation of the Madhupur Jungle to the glacial period when it was the delta of a river entering the sea, which still covered all parts of Bengal south of Goalundo. Major Hirst is, however, of opinion that the red soil is more in the nature of a top dressing and that the earlier deposits of the glaciers lie far deeper than any borings have yet reached. The greater portion of Mymensingh owes its soil to the alluvial action of the existing rivers, chiefly the Brāhmaputra, which by constantly changing its channels has deposited its silt over the northern and western parts of the district. Unlike the earlier hill streams the Brāhmaputra and the Ganges show a scarcely perceptible drop through long distances, and the silt they can carry is of finer material than the *débris* which helped to make the older alluvion. The deposits by which the Brāhmaputra raises its banks at the beginning of every fall consist chiefly of the finest silver sand.

It is hard to understand how a river having gradually raised its banks to a height greatly exceeding that of the surrounding country comes to desert that channel and to cut a completely new course through the lower country to the east

or west. (a) The phenomenon is partly due to the gradual silting up of the bed itself and to a natural tendency to take a shortcut through the long sweeps, which any river maintaining the same channel for any time in this country inevitably develops to an incredible extent. (b) Possibly the change follows exceptional floods when the main body of the river remains in any flood channel which is lower than its late bed. Whatever the reason, it is certain that the whole of the Jamālpur and Sadar subdivisions are full of old river channels and that the highest *basti* sites are the banks or island *chars* of rivers which have subsequently wandered away.

The two banks of the old Brāhmaputra from the foot of the Gāro Hills to Bhairab provide the highest land in the district. At the 1897 earthquake sand broke through the surface in many villages now remote from any considerable river, showing that the whole of the Dewānganj and Sherpur thānas at one time lay in the bed of the Brāhmaputra. The whole of the Jamālpur subdivision together with the Sarisābāri and Durgapur and Fulpur thanas may be assigned to this division.

Natural divisions.

The next division is the Madhupur Jungle. On the whole the limits are well defined and may be seen at a glance from any district map. There is one outlying portion in the middle of the Ghatail thāna, where 23 thāk maps were treated as one unit at the Revenue Survey and called the Garh Gazāli, though this is the name generally applied to the main area also, from the tree which is characteristic of this forest. The soil is a stiff red clay, rich in iron, but deficient in sand. In some places this soil is 100 feet deep, and beneath it again there is sand.

Madhupur Jungle.

It seems certain that this low level laterite, though lacking in stratification, was originally a deltaic formation and that it has been raised in the course of recent movements of the earth's crust. Major Hirst is of opinion that the upheaval is comparatively recent and that it is still going on. His theory is that there is a compensatory sinkage in a long strip running north and south from Jalpaiguri to Goalundo and corresponding with the present bed of the Jamuna. To the gradual raising of the Madhupur Jungle he attributes the historical

(a) The process can be studied with great advantage when riding from Mymensingh to Ramgopalpur.

(b) The Kangsha is a good example. It goes 12 miles where it might go 3 between Jaria and Dōtukan. The Mogra near Netrakona has the most extraordinary bends.

changes in the course of the Brāhmaṇaputra and the shifting of the Ganges from its old channel the Dhaleswari.

At first sight this theory is inconsistent with the curious unevenness of the Jungle which is really hilly in parts. Possibly the process of raising has broken the original level surface of the delta, and the Bengal climate has exercised a wearing effect on the less protected portions. In the outlying portions, especially near Kaorāid, there are no hills, but the uniform ridges of red soil are interspersed by basins and serpentine channels of ordinary dark clay which are called *bais*. The steep slope between the mounds and the *baid* is usually overgrown with scrub jungle. The table-lands grow crops of mustard and jute for one or two years, but the soil is really unfertile and the villagers depend mainly on the *baid* lands which grow *āman* rice.

Fossils are very rare in the jungle and give no clue to the date of its formation. It is extraordinarily hot and unhealthy, as the trees keep off all air and are not of a kind to give much shade. The characteristic tree is a bastard *sāl* (*gazāri*). There is a small tract near Gupta Brindāban in which the *sāl* and the scrub jungle give way to massive trees covered with orchids and creepers.

In some of the Sherpur, Haluaghāt and Durgapur villages there are small hillocks and thick jungle, but these are merely outlying portions of the Gārō Hills, not to be considered as part of any natural division of the Mymensingh district.

The general characteristic of the Mymensingh villages which lie near the hills is their extreme flatness, and there are unusually long unbroken stretches of paddy land. There are few trees, and the *khāls* are very narrow, but extremely deep down in their beds and difficult to cross. The really jungly villages of Mymensingh apart from the Garh Gazāli are to be found in the centre, not in the north, of the Fulpur and Durgapur thanas. There is a belt of villages containing huge *bils* and large stretches of coarse thatching grass starting from half-way between Nālitabāri and Piyārpur through Sankarpur to Pāgla, which are more likely to harbour big game than any of the villages north of the Kangsha, Nitāi and Someswari rivers.

In the rest of the district from the comparatively dry Alāpsingh villages in Sadar thānā to the water-logged villages of Astagrām and Khāliajuri, where the only crop that can be grown is *boro* paddy, big *bils* are common and the soil is clay rather than sandy. In the cold weather the soil from

which the *āman* paddy has been cut cakes and cracks and the only good riding is in villages where winter crops are plentiful. The east of the Netrakona and Kishorganj subdivisions form a division by themselves. Rivers and *khāls* are innumerable, and the water subsides so late and rises so early, that the lands on their banks, which appear high and dry in the cold weather, have barely time to grow any crops and are covered with scrub jungle waist high, though the thick beds of *dhub* grass in the more open parts give splendid grazing to cattle. The lower portions never dry up at all, but can be planted with *boro* paddy in January and February. There are no trees and no bamboos. The homesteads, consisting usually of only one hut each, are clustered close together, so that one mound of artificially raised earth can accommodate the maximum of inhabitants. The outlying cowsheds are propped up with bamboos, 12 or 14 feet long, from the adjoining plain. These villages are far apart and, seen from a long distance on a cold-weather morning, have almost the appearance of a mirage. In the cold weather the banks of the rivers are dotted here and there with the temporary huts of fishermen. In the rains even the biggest villages like Khāliajuri and Itna consist of two or three isolated islands with bamboo barriers to protect them from the waves.

In his Gazetteer of Dacca Mr. Allen takes a very pessimistic Scenery. view of the scenery, describing the country as dull and desolate in the extreme. This cannot be said of many parts of Mymensingh at any season of the year. Except at the ploughing season it is one expanse of vivid green up to the horizon, the whole of which is belted with groups of houses hidden in clusters of graceful bamboos and palms. Single trees, which rival the best of the English varieties for shape and the permanence of their foliage, are here and there prominent in the landscape. In the eastern villages *maths*, like steeples without a church, form conspicuous landmarks, and are often the only means of identifying a distant village. That at Gauhatā south of Nāgarpur can be seen from many of the *chars* in the Serājganj subdivision. On the bank of any river pretty views and camping places are the rule rather than the exception, and some of the village sites on the deep *dahars* or dead rivers in Netrakona and Kishorganj are picturesque in the extreme.

Some of the *bils* as at Fulkocha and Purbadhala are absolutely clear of weeds and quite resemble an English lake. In May and June huge water lilies make the shallower *bils* a blaze of brilliant scarlet.

River system.

The best account of the river system of this part of Bengal I have seen is in Mr. A. C. Sen's Agricultural Statistics for the Dacca district. The Jamuna, nowhere less than 4 miles wide in the rains, forms the western boundary of Mymensingh and the equally important Meghna encloses it on the east. They are connected by the old channel of the Brāhmaṇaputra running through the centre of the district in a south-easterly direction from above Bahādurabad to Bhairab-Bazar. The Dhaleswari, first an old channel of the Ganges and then of the Brāhmaṇaputra, cuts across the south-western corner of the district on its way to join the Meghna at Narāyanganj. The Dhanu, lower down called the Ghorāutra, a fine stream navigable by steamers throughout the year, is a tributary of the Meghna and flows directly southwards from Sonāmganj in Sylhet through the eastern thānās of Netrakona and Kishorganj. Both these rivers fall and rise with the daily tides, and even the *khāls* connected with them a long way inland at places like Gog Bazar and Badla feel the effect of the neap tides. At Gāglājuri the Dhanu is joined by the Kangsha, which, coming from the Gāro Hills past Nālitabāri as the Bhogāi, is at its best in the Netrakona subdivision at Dēotūkon and Barhatta. After Mahanganj it becomes a narrow winding *khāl* with banks little higher than its own lowest level.

The old Brāhmaṇaputra's most important offshoot is the Jināi; striking off near Jamālpur it rejoins the Jamuna north of Sārisabāri, while another branch flows past Gopālpur.

The Bangsha forms a natural barrier to the Madhupur Jungle on the Tangāil side all the way from Madhupur to Mirzāpur. It is only fordable at two or three places near Bāsāil.

The most interesting question in connection with the river system of Mymensingh is when and why the Brāhmaṇaputra changed its main channel. In prehistoric times it is not improbable that it flowed direct south more or less along its present main channel. From the beginning of history to the end of the eighteenth century it flowed past Jamālpur to Mymensingh and Agarasindur. The river practically stretched from Jamālpur to Sherpur, 7 or 8 miles as the crow flies, and the present Shiri was one with it. As to its course through Dacca from Agarasindur, there is some uncertainty. Mr. Sen thinks the old geographers made mistakes and that it did not join the Meghna at Bhairab Bazar, but struck off a mile below Agārasindur at Arālia to Lakhipur and then flowed in a south-westerly direction past Nangalband and Panchamighat to

Rāmpāl, joining the Meghna not at Kalāgāchia, but at Rājbāri. The dried-up bed between Arālia and Lakhipur is wrongly called the Lakshya in the revenue maps. This river branches off from the Brāhmaṇaputra at Lakhipur.

It has usually been assumed that the change in the course of the main waters of the Brāhmaṇaputra took place suddenly in 1787, the year of the famous flooding of the Tista river. It is, however, well known that the Tista has always been a wandering river, sometimes joining the Ganges, sometimes being shifted eastwards by the superior strength of that river and forced to join the Brāhmaṇaputra. It is now proved that the great Tibetan river Tsangpo joined the Brāhmaṇaputra about 1780, and this accession was of more importance than the Tista floods in deciding the Brāhmaṇaputra to try a shorter way to the sea.

In the middle of the eighteenth century there were at least three fair-sized streams flowing between the present Rājshāhi and Dacca Divisions, viz., the Dāokobā, a branch of the Tista, the Monāsh or Konāi, and the Salāngi. The Lohājang and Elengjāni were also important rivers. In Rennell's time the Brāhmaṇaputra as a first step towards securing a more direct course to the sea by leaving the Madhupur Jungle to the east began to send a considerable body of water down the Jināi or Jabuna from Jamālpur into the Monāsh and Salāngi. These rivers gradually coalesced and kept shifting to the west till they met the Dāokobā, which was showing an equally rapid tendency to cut to the east. The junction of these rivers gave the Brāhmaṇaputra a course worthy of her immense power, and the rivers to the right and left silted up. In Rennell's Atlas they much resemble the rivers of Jessore and Hooghly, which dried up after the hundred-mouthed Ganges had cut her new channel to join the Meghna at the south of the Munshiganj subdivision.

In 1809 Buchanan Hamilton writes that the new channel between Bhowānipur and Dewānganj "was scarcely inferior to the mighty river, and threatens to sweep away the intermediate country." By 1830 the old channel had been reduced to its present insignificance.* It is navigable by country boats throughout the year and by launches in the rains, but as low

* Fisher was deputed in 1830 to report on the causes of the silting up of the Brāhmaṇaputra. Sir Joseph Hooker writing in 1850 says that "we were surprised to hear that within the last 20 years the main channel had shifted its course westwards, the eastern channel silted up so rapidly that the Jamal (Jamuna) eventually became the principal stream."

as Jamālpur it is fordable throughout the cold weather and for two or three months just below Mymensingh also.

As early as 1830 there were resumption proceedings for *chars* which had formed in the new bed, and inquiries showed that many of the new formations were on the site of permanently-settled villages which had been washed away by the changes of the Jamuna and the Dāokobā. The process has gone on ever since, and Buchanan Hamilton's remarks on the villages of Bengal are especially applicable to this area. He says that "a change in the site of a village 4 or 5 miles causes little inconvenience and is considered no more than a usual casualty, which produces on the people no effect of consequence. Even the rich never put up buildings of a durable nature."

Geology.

The question of geology has been touched upon in connection with the Madhupur Jungle. There are no stones and no rocks in the district. A reference in the *Ain-i-Akbari* and traces of smelting operations occasionally found prove that iron used to be mined from the Madhupur Jungle, but nothing of the sort goes on now. *Kankar* is found in small quantities. The iron and copper used for the local manufacture of agricultural instruments and cooking utensils is all imported.

Botany.

In his "Topography of the Dacca District," written in 1840, Mr. Taylor gave a full account of the vegetable productions of that district. Mr. Sen's "Monograph on the Agriculture of the Dacca District" gives a complete list of the medicinal shrubs with the parts of the plant used and the diseases for which they are beneficial. The botany of the Mymensingh district has never attracted the attention of an expert with special qualifications. From the notes supplied by Babu Iswar Chandra Guha, a pleader of Jamālpur, who has long made a hobby of the subject and experimented with new varieties of fruit trees and shrubs in his own garden, it would appear that what has already been written about Dacca applies equally well to Mymensingh.

The most striking points of the botanical products of the district are the extraordinary number of trees of all-round utility and the semi-wild state in which they grow. There are a few gardens belonging to Tālukdārs, where orchards are fenced in and fruit trees, chiefly plantains and palms, are planted with some care, but for the most part no trouble is taken to select and protect seedlings or to increase the number of profitable and palatable fruit trees which seem to flourish by accident in or near a few homesteads. It is the same with the bigger trees which are useful for timber. In the Nātor estate in the Madhupur Jungle the *gazāri* or bastard *sāl* is jealously

guarded and made the source of huge profits. The District Board has made expensive, but not consistently successful efforts to grow useful trees at regular intervals along the main roads. The giant trees, like the *banyan*, *tamarind*, *pipal*, and *aswatha* for the most part grow at the corner of fields, on bits of waste land used for shrines and *hâts*, or in the middle of villages. There is no attempt to plant out nurseries from which the old trees can be gradually supplemented and replaced in places where they will not interfere with agriculture.

The chief fruit trees of the district are the Mango (Bengali *Am*, Latin *Mangifera indica*), Jack (B. *Kânthâl*, L. *Artocarpus Integrifolia*), Litchi (B. *Lichu*, L. *Nephelium*), Tamarind (B. *Tetul*, L. *Tamarindus indica*), Peach (B. *Sapthalu*, L. *Prunus persica*), Guava (B. *Sabri-Am*, L. *Psidium Guyava*), Limes, (B. *Lebu*, L. *Citrus Medica*), Pomelo (B. *Jambura*, L. *Citrus decumana*), Plantains (B. *Kola*, L. *Musa sapientum*). Pineapples (B. *Anâras*, L. *Ananas sativa*), Custard apple (B. *Ata*, L. *Anona squamosa*) Monkey's apple or Bulloch's Heart (B. *Nona*, L. *Anona reticulata*), *Bêl*, (L. *Aegle marmelos*), *Papya* (the name is practically the same in English, Latin and Bengali) and various kinds of plums which grow practically wild.

The most important are certainly the plantain and the jack fruit. Both are among the chief articles of barter at every bazar, and the latter is so prolific and grows to such an immense size that it forms a staple article of diet with the poorer people. Mangoes are always attacked by worms before they are ripe, and no good varieties are grown in the district. They are chiefly eaten by school children, who call their summer holidays the *Am Kânthâlér Chuti* and take full advantage of the universal custom that fruit blown down by the wind, wherever it grows, is the property of the finder.

Peaches and litchis grow so well in a few gardens that it is strange that every big householder does not find space for them in his compound. The limes, of which there are endless varieties, are usually deficient in juice, but as they are in all cases practically wild, it is only a question of cultivation. The oranges which are sold in such quantities in the bazars in the cold weather come from Sylhet by boat.

Palm trees grow in every *basti*, the most useful being the cocoanut (*Narikel*; *Cocos nucifera*): it flourishes best near the sea, but there are few villages in the more thickly populated parts of the district where this refreshing fruit cannot be found for a touring officer. The shell of the fruit is used for *hookah*.

bowls and the fibre for mats and coir mattresses and many other purposes, and cocoanut oil is the valuable product of the kernel. Betelnut (*B. Supari*, *L. Areca catechu*) is still more common than the cocoanut. Its trunk is remarkable for its extreme slenderness and straightness. Parts of the date palm (*B. Khājur*, *L. Phænix-sylvestris*) are used for all possible purposes, but the fruit is hardly edible, and the palm is chiefly cultivated for the juice which in this district is made into sugar, seldom into toddy.

The fan palm (*B. Tālgāch*, *L. Borassus flabelliformis*) is useful for its fibre and juices rather than its fruit.

In addition to the *gazāri* and the mango, the chief trees used for timber are the *jārul*, a very hard wood used for beams, door-frames and other substantial parts of houses, but chiefly for boat building, a purpose for which it is particularly suited owing to its water-resisting qualities. The *rangi*, of a red colour as its name implies, is another wood used for cheap boats as well as for furniture. The *karai* and the *ajugi*, easily workable woods, are used for rafters and the lighter portions of houses. The jack is used by carpenters for general cabinet making purposes. It resembles the *jām* in its wet-resisting qualities, and for this reason these trees are generally chosen for making posts which have to be imbedded in water. The *royna* is used for cheap bedsteads and the *chambal* (usually imported, though it grows in the Madhupur Jungle) is a favourite for door frames. The *sissoo* has generally to be imported, but the trees in the Collector's garden prove that it grows satisfactorily in Mymensingh. The *gāb* tree bears a rough fruit, which after crushing and boiling provides a tar-like substance of a deep red colour used commonly for caulking the seams of boats. The *simul* or cotton tree is very common, but it is not used as much as would be expected in view of the fact that in Assam it is widely used for making tea boxes.

Nearly all English vegetables grow splendidly in the cold weather, tomatoes and brussels-sprouts going on till quite late in April. The indigenous vegetables are chiefly melons, *brinjals*, marrows, gourds, pumpkins and *arums*.

A few varieties of flowering shrubs are common. The *jhāo* or tamarisk, the first sign of permanence on all *chars*, bears a fine purple bloom in August. The wild rose grows on the Brāhmaputra *chars* and in the wilds of Khāliajuri, but otherwise, except in the Madhupur Jungle, flowers, like butterflies are rare and confined to a few species which do not differ in different localities. Even in the jungle they compare very

unfavourably with the flowers of an English hedgerow. The commonest is the heliotrope coloured "jack jungle", a species of *ageratum*. There are flowering trees similar to the lilac and the laburnum, and the red blossoms of the *simul* and *palash* trees make a good substitute for the gold mohur in many open villages where no other tree grows.

The bamboo and the *bet* are good examples of the complex uses to which the commonest flora of the district can be put, but the palms are equally adaptable from the economic point of view.

In addition to all the plants used mainly for medicinal purposes doctors extract remedies for the common diseases from the bark and roots of the mango, *simul*, *tulsi*, and other generally useful trees. The *bel*, *gab* and *babul* trees provide gum, the seeds of the tamarind yield oil, which is used in painting idols, and the bark of the guava is used for tanning. Scent is manufactured from the *keora*, a plant rather like the pineapple, which grows in most *busti* jungle.

Reynolds says that in the middle of the nineteenth century the chars in the north-west contained as many tigers as any district in India and that rhinoceros had occasionally been shot. Tigers are still numerous in the Madhupur Jungle and at the foot of the Garo Hills, but without plenty of elephants they are difficult to get. It is possible for a keen sportsman to camp several months in the heart of the jungle, and for kills to be going on all around him without his getting information from the villagers in time to sit up on a tree. Leopards are occasionally shot in all thanas. Bears come down from the hills in the jack fruit season, and are also shot by native shikaris in the Madhupur Jungle.

Wild elephants used to work havoc in the northern villages, but now they seem to confine themselves to wrecking boundary pillars. Kheddah operations were conducted in 1915 by the Susang Raj just inside the Garo Hills, and a fine tusker followed the captured elephants nearly two days and was finally made captive in the centre of the Durgapur bazar. Three years ago a proscribed elephant was shot a few miles from the thana.

Wild buffaloes are not unknown in the grass jungle north of Kalmakanda and in the north-west of the Madhupur Jungle.

Sambhor (*Rusa aristotelis*), *barasingha* (*Bucerius duvaucellii*) hog deer (*Axis porcinus*) and barking deer (*Cervulus vaginalis*) are all found, the two former rarely and the two latter commonly. The Garos catch *sambhor* in nets and shoot other deer from hiding places near their drinking holes. At Bausan not far from the Mymensingh-Sylhet border there is a

small scrub jungle where hog deer are so numerous that the local shikaris and mahouts call it Harinbagān.

The Bandor or Morkot monkey is common in the Madhupur Jungle. Hooloocks or gibbons can be heard calling at the foot of the Garo Hills, but they are rarely seen.

The pig is seldom to be found, and pig-sticking is an impossibility at the foot of the hills. Among the smaller animals the mongoose and civet cat (*bāghdash*) are extraordinarily common. Hares, as well as foxes and jackals, can generally be put up on an open *char*. The black rabbit (*Lepus hespidus*) used to frequent the Madhupur Jungle. Otters are far from rare, though they want some looking for.

B.rds. The chief game birds are the red jungle fowl, which can be seen feeding in the evenings at the foot of the Garo Hills in parties of ten or more. They are very numerous round Singerchala, Jugircopa, Salgrampur and other places in the Madhupur Jungle, though they are very shy. Peacocks live in a regular colony in Kalidas, a village of the Madhupur Jungle. Quail occur in small numbers in many scattered parts of the district, and the blue-breasted quail (*Excalfactoria chinensis*) and grey quail (*Colurnix communis*) are sometimes met with in large flocks near patches of grass jungle, feeding in the recently cut paddy fields at the foot of the hills. Other birds, which occur only or chiefly near the hills, are the swamp partridge or *kaya* (*Francolinus gularis*), the black-breasted *kālij*, or pheasant (*Durug* among Garos and *māthura* among Bengali shikaris) and possibly the rare wood snipe (*Gallinago nemoricola*). The large egret (*Heroclias alba*) is a conspicuous inhabitant of the Durgapur swamps. Among other birds the black-winged kite (*Elanus melanopterus*), the swallow strike (*Artamus fuscus*) and the lesser coucal (*Centropus Bengalensis*) are found here and probably nowhere else in Mymensingh.

The Khāliajuri pargana is famous for its duck shooting. From November till the first warm days of February pintail and many other kinds abound and the jungle growing close to the edge of the lagoon-shaped *bils*, which the larger duck chiefly favour, makes shooting easy. After March the spot-billed duck (*Ancus parclorhynca*) is the only variety that stays on in any number. It and the rarer pink-headed duck (*Rhodonessa caryophyllacea*) breed in the district, and it seems a strange oversight of the Wild Birds' Protection Act to deny them the protection which is given to the cotton and whistling teal.

On the *chars* of the Jamuna there are all varieties of duck, including the rare sheldrake (*Tadorna cornuta*), but they are

much harder to approach. The bar-headed goose (*Anser indicus*) arrives about the first week of November. It is only towards the end of February when they are preparing to depart from their favourite *chars* that they occasionally allow a country boat to bring them within reach of a gun.

The grey goose (*Anser Ruburostus*) is only seen early and late in the season, suggesting that it only halts *en passant*.

The water-cock or *kora* (*Gallicrex cristata*) is kept by the villagers for fighting and is bred in a curious way. The eggs are taken from the wild birds' nests and put into a cocoanut shell with some cotton wool; this is then bound tightly mouth downwards over the waist of the finder and the eggs are hatched by the warmth of his body. Many villages contain birds thus bred, and ten rupees is the least sum for which a bird can be bought.

On the Meghna about November large flocks of ruffs and reeves (*Machetes Pugnari*) arrive; the males have by then put off their breeding plumage from which they get their name, but are conspicuous by their larger size. These birds are excellent for the table.

The bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*) is found occasionally and the crane or *koolong* (*Grus cinerea*) is also a winter visitor.

The marsh babbler (*Megalurus palustris*) is caught in the reeds in a net trap baited with grass-hoppers and sent by the shikaris to Calcutta, where it presumably appears in the New Market. Round the fishermen's *kholas* there is a constant swarm of kites Brahminy kites, and often fish eagles and ospreys, and in the rivers close by there are often flocks of the curious scissor-billed tern (*Rhyncops albicollis*). One large gull (*Larus Brunneicephalus*) is found in winter and spring on all the large rivers.

Of the eight storks found in India all except the white stork, the marabout and the black stork are to be seen on the *chars* of the Jamuna, the commonest being the adjutant (*B. hargila*, L. *Leptopterus dubius*), the painted stork (*gunghil*) and the white-necked or beef-steak stork (*manikjor*). The jabim (*Lohzrjung*) and the open bill (L. *Onastomus elegans* *B. shambuk bhanja*) as well as the ibises frequent inland *bils*. The spoon-bill (L. *Platalea leucordia*, B. *chamuch buza*) has been seen near Porabari steamer station. Among the smaller wading birds the avocet (L. *Recurvirostra avocetta*, B. *kusya chaha*) is not uncommon. Its peculiar up-turned bill and its pied plumage, as well as the fact that it is generally considered

a rarity, make it an interesting inhabitant of the *chars*. Its relation the stilt (*Himantopus charadrius* B. *Lal tengi*) is commoner and also more suitable for the table. The curlew (*Numenius arquata*, B. *kanchichora*) and the whimbrel are not common on the Jamuna. The green-shank (*Sotanus glottis*) frequents half-hidden pools of water everywhere, but its unmistakeable note betrays its presence. The little green-shank (*Sotanus stagnatilis*), the red-shank (*Sotanus calidus*) and the grey plover (*Squatarola helvetica*) are found occasionally. The Indian lapwing (*Sacrogammus Indicus*, B. *titi*) is ubiquitous in the big river, and as soon as the August floods begin to subside the first companies of golden plover (*Charadrius fulvus*) settle on the *chars* and search the newly deposited mud for food, rising at times in flocks to search for fresh feeding grounds. At this period they are unusually tame, like ducks in England after a sudden thaw, and will almost certainly form part of the first "bag" of the shooting season. Of smaller birds the little ring plover (*Aegialitis dubia*), the spotted sand-piper (*Sotanus glavola*), the common and the green sand-pipers (*Sotanus hypoleucus* and *S. ochrops*) the swallow-like small pratincole (*Glareola lactea*) and the little stint (*Tringa minuta*) are all common. Another somewhat uncommon bird which, like the avocet, will probably be found in greater numbers on the Jamuna than elsewhere, is the great thick knee or "goggle-eyed" plover (*Esacus recurvirostris*). Its large size and its unmistakeable beak, more suitable for a crow than a plover, and its eyes, as conspicuous as the eyes of a painted snipe or woodcock, are all remarkable, and quite justify the difficulty which naturalists have found in classifying it.

Snipe are plentiful, but it is not always easy to find them. Near Astagrām, Dholapārā and Mādarganj they have been shot in great numbers at various times. The varieties include fantail, pintail and jack. The so-called ortolans, strictly the short-toed lark, feed on ploughed fields in large flocks in April. The other birds of the district can be studied to most advantage in the Madhupur Jungle.

I am indebted for the following notes to Mr. L. R. Fawcett, I.C.S.

Bulbuls.—The two commonest species are *Pycnonotus pygmaeus*, the common bulbul, and *Otocompsa jocosa*, the red-whiskered or soldier bulbul. The Assamese bulbul (*Rubigula flaviventris*), appeared unexpectedly common in March and April. It generally associates in pairs and is often

found on mango and other large trees in blossom, hunting for insects. The gold-fronted green bulbul, (*Phyllornis aurifrons*) is fairly common. It is shyer and more arboreal in its habits than other bulbuls. The white-winged iora (*Iora typhia*) also occurs, chiefly in scrub jungle.

Orioles.—The only oriole I found in the jungle is (*Oriolus melanocephalus*), the Bengal black-headed oriole.

Leiotrichinae.—An unexpected discovery was *Zosterops palpebrosus*, the white-eyed tit. This bird is stated by Jerdon not to occur at all in Lower Bengal. The flock from which I got specimens was associating with another Himalayan bird, the red honeysucker, on a large flowering tree in deep jungle. The tits were hunting for insects.

Parus cinereus.—The Indian grey tit should occur in the jungle as I have seen it twice in other parts of Mymensingh in the cold weather.

The Timalinæ.—Two somewhat rare birds of this family occur in the Madhupur Jungle, one being *Trichastoma Abbotti*, the brown-backed tit babbler, which I found fairly common in one locality in March. It goes about in small flocks, flying short distances at a time much after the manner of the seven sisters. It is not such a noisy bird. I also found *Mixornis rubicapillus*, the yellow-breasted wren babbler, in small flocks hunting among the upper branches of mango trees. The common babbler or seven sisters (*Malacocircus terricolor*) is common everywhere.

Of the *Sylviadæ* the tailor bird (*Orthotomus longicauda*) and the greenish tree warbler, (*Phylloscopus viridanus*) are common. Of the *Corvidæ* the Indian corby (*Corvus culminatus*) and the Indian crow (*Corvus splendens*), and the Indian magpie (*Dendrocitta rufa*) are all common. Of the mynas *Acridotheres tristis* and *A. fuscus* are the two common varieties. The pied starling (*Sturnopastor contra*) is also very common: rarer kinds are the bank myna (*A. ginginianus*) and the grey-headed myna (*Temenuchus Malabaricus*). This bird associates in small flocks of seven or eight and is far more arboreal in its habits than the other mynas.

Laniadae.—The commonest shrikes of the jungle are the black-headed shrike (*Lanius nigriceps*) and the grey-backed shrike (*Lanius tephronotus*). *Tephrodornis Pondiceriana*, the wood shrike, is also fairly common. The large cuckoo shrike (*Grauculus Macei*), is a striking inhabitant of the open parts of the jungle. It goes about usually in pairs and has a striking call-note.

Volvocivora melaschistos, the dark-grey cuckoo shrike, is found more rarely. It is a solitary bird, and has the habit of haunting the same trees in the jungle day after day. Unlike the large cuckoo shrike, it does not seem to descend to the ground. The small minivet (*Pericrocotus peregrinus*) has striking colouring, and is one of the few birds which is often to be found among the somewhat sparse foliage of the *gazāri* tree. Its Bengali name *Satsati kapi* means "beloved of seven damsels," and is said to be given to it not for its beauty, but because one male bird usually associates with six or seven females.

Among the Drongos *Dicrurus macrocercus*, the common king crow, and *Chaptia ænea*, the bronzed drongo, are the commonest. I have twice seen the splendid *Edolius Paradiseus* or large racket-tailed drongo.

Phaenicophaeinae.—The *koel* (*Eudynamis honoratus*) is common throughout the jungle. The large green-billed *malkoha* (*Rhopodytes tristis*) is conspicuous for its large size and long tail. It keeps to thick jungle, but is not particularly shy; it has a curious habit, when suspicious of observation, of remaining motionless with its head averted from the spectator, thus, by accident or design, effectually concealing its vivid green beak and conspicuous red orbital skin. It feeds on beetles and grasshoppers. *Centropus Sinensis*, the common *coucal* or crow pheasant, is extremely common. I have seen (*C. Bengalensis*), the lesser coucal, in Durgapur, but not in the jungle.

Cuculidae.—I have once clearly heard the English cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*) in March in the jungle. *C. micropterus*, the Indian cuckoo, whose note is represented by the words "Make more pekoe" is common, as is also the brainfever bird or hawk cuckoo (*Hierococcyx varius*). Other cuckoos found are the plaintive cuckoo (*Cacomantis Passerinus*) and the rufous-bellied cuckoo (*Cacomantis Merulinus*).

Muscicapidae.—*Stoparola Melanops* (blue canary) is fairly common in thick jungle. It appears to keep chiefly to high trees. *Culicicapa Ceylonensis*—(grey-headed flycatcher) is the commonest flycatcher in the Madhupur jungle. In habits it resembles our English flycatcher, sitting at no great height from the ground and making frequent sallies to catch its insect prey. *Hypothymis azurea*—(black-naped flycatcher) is only locally distributed. I did not see it at all in February, but in March it appeared commonly in places I had searched thoroughly a month earlier. On the wing the shining blue of this bird is

strangely inconspicuous. The white-throated fantail (*Rhipidura albicollis*) is a common bird in the jungle. It differs from any other flycatcher I have seen in its habit of keeping very low down and flitting from bush to bush more in the fashion of the *Turdidae*. In habits it is distinctly unlike a flycatcher, though its structure makes it difficult to place elsewhere.

Nectarinidae.—Mymensingh district has proved to be unexpectedly rich in these small birds.

The *Chalcoparia Phænicotis* (ruby cheek) differs from all *Nectarinidae* by the absence of serrations in the mandibles. It is not uncommon in the jungle, and though it keeps to somewhat lower vegetation than the sun-birds and flower-peckers, I certainly did not see it go about in the under-growth and in parties of five to ten as Davison describes. I observed it in March and have no reason to believe from the results of dissection that it was breeding at this time.

Aethopyga Seheriae, for which Jerdon's name of red honey-sucker is more appropriate than Blanford's yellow-backed honey-sucker, is unexpectedly common. It searches for insects at the tops of high trees in blossom, occasionally descending lower for a few moments. An immature male shot on March 10th had no lengthened tail feathers, while the red and violet hues were only just beginning to appear. This is not a winter plumage, as I saw males in full plumage on the same day and at the same place. The female is greenish-olive with a few red markings on the back.

The common sun-bird of the jungle, *Arachnechthra Asiatica*, is comparatively tame and can be found almost everywhere. Another sun-bird, *A. Zeylonica*, I have seen several times. Its yellow breast is conspicuous, and as it was near enough to distinguish with glasses the curved bill and short tail, I do not think there can be any doubt as to its identity.

Dicaeum Cruentatum. I obtained this bird at Kendua and saw it at Hossenpar, but never to my knowledge in the Madhupur jungle. It certainly should appear there. *D. Erythrorhynthus*, Tickell's flower-pecker, is common. I found a nest in March, dome-shaped with an opening in the side and lined with silky fibres, pendant to a branch of a small shrub about 6 feet high. Three eggs were in it: as they were hard set, this is probably the full number laid.

Turdidae, *Pratincola Maura*, the Indian bush chat, is found commonly on the outskirts of the jungle.

Pratincola leucura, the white-tailed bush chat, is described by Blanford as a Mymensingh bird, and hence in all probability occurs. I never found it. *Ruticilla rufiventris*, Indian Redstart, is common. It appears to be especially fond of frequenting the piles of *gazari* timber, which are collected for sale in various parts of the jungle. *Calliope Camtschatkensis*, the Ruby Throat, is uncommon. I found it only once at Kakrajan. *Copsychus Sularis*, the common Magpie-Robin or *dayal* is ubiquitous. *Citlocincla Macrura*, the Shama : in all retired parts of the jungle and above all in the neighbourhood of the old half-silted tanks this splendid songster is found. It is not as shy as it is reputed to be, and will allow one to stand within a few yards of it listening to its song. *Geosichla citrina*, Orange-breasted Ground Thrush. This Himalayan bird is fairly common in winter in the jungle. Like the Shama, it haunts the old disused tanks and drying *khāl* beds, hunting among the leaves for insects. Those I have dissected appear to feed mainly on beetles. *Petrophila Solitaria*, the Eastern blue rock thrush is uncommon. *Oreocincla Dauma*, Small-billed mountain Thrush. I obtained a specimen of this Himalayan bird in February close to Salgrampur. It was feeding among dead leaves and went away with a very direct flight almost like a game bird.

Of the *Fringillidae*, *Ploceus Baya*, the *baya* or weaver bird is very common. *Munia Atricapilla*, the chestnut-bellied munia, is the rarest of the three munias found in the jungle. I only saw a flock on one occasion late in March. *Uroloncha Punctulata*, the spotted munia is common. *Sporaeeginthus Amanbava*, the red wax-bill is also common, but appears to keep more to the outskirts of the jungle.

Wagtails, Pipits and Larks are not jungle birds in general. *Anthus Maculatus* (Indian tree pipit) is, however, commonly found even in deep jungle in small flocks.

Picidae—*Gecinus striolatus*—Small green wood-pecker is locally distributed, but not rare.

Dendrocopos Macei, Indian spotted wood-pecker, is rare. *Micropternus Phaeocephalus*, Rufous wood-pecker, is common. *Brachypternus Aurantius*, Golden-backed wood-pecker, is found everywhere.

Iyngipicus—(Pigmy wood-pecker).—The only specimen of this genus which I shot is an intermediate form between *I. Hardwickii* and *I. Canicapillus*.

Capitonidae.—*Thereiceryx Zeylonicus*, the common barbet, and *Zantholaema Hæmatocephala*, the coppersmith, are very common.

Coracias Affinis, the Roller (blue-jay) is common everywhere.

Merops Viridis, common Bee-eater, is also ubiquitous. *Merops Philippinus*, blue-tailed Bee-eater, is found occasionally, but is much rarer and shyer.

Alcedininae.—*Ceryle varia*, (pied king-fisher), and *Alcedo Ispida* (common king-fisher), are found wherever there is water.

Halcyon Smyrnensis, White-breasted king-fisher, is found often far away from water in dense and dry jungle.

Pelargopsis Gurial, Brown-headed king-fisher, is fairly common.

Bucerotidae.—I have seen a pair of hornbills twice, but cannot identify them with certainty. Their plumage was black and white and beaks and casque yellow.

Upupa Indica, Indian hoopoe, is quite common, as is *Tachornis Batassiensis*, the palm swift.

Caprimulgus Macrurus, Horsfield's nightjar, and *Caprimulgus Monticulus*, Franklin's nightjar, are the common nightjars of the jungle.

Of the Parrots, *Palæornis Torquatus*, Rose-ringed paroquet, is very common, *Palæornis Rosa*, Eastern blossom-headed paroquet, is less common.

Of the Owls *Ketupa Zeylonensis*, Brown fish owl, is the commonest. *Athene Brama*, spotted owlet, is found.

Accipitres.—*Pandion Haliaetus*, the osprey, is common on the bits on the outskirts of the jungle.

Of the Vultures, *Otugyps Calvus*, the "King vulture," *Pseudogyps Bengalensis*, common vulture, are common. *Gyps Indicus*, the long-billed vulture is found more rarely.

Ictinætus Malayensis, the black eagle, is to be seen at times soaring over the jungle. The commonest of the eagles are *Spizætus Limnætus*, the changeable hawk eagle; *Circætus Gallicus*, common serpent eagle; *Spilornis Cheela*, crested serpent eagle; *Haliætus Leucoryphus*, Pallas fishing eagle; *Polioætus Ichthyætus*, grey-headed fishing eagle. I have seen *Pernis Christatus*, the honey buzzard, once or twice, but it is not common. The common kite, the Brahminy kite, the *shikra* (*Astur Badius*), the Kestrel (*Tinunculus Alaudarius*) are all common and the red-headed merlin or *turumti* (*Aesalon Chicquera*) is also found.

Columbidae.—Two green pigeons, *Crocopus Phoenicopterus*, the Bengal green pigeon and *Treron Bicincta*, the orange-breasted green pigeon are not confined to the jungle. The former is very common and associates in large flocks except at breeding time. I found its nest in April with two eggs in a small tree not more than 5 feet from the ground. The latter is rarer, and does not associate in large flocks, nor is it found in the drier parts of the jungle. It prefers the neighbourhood of water. I did not find any imperial pigeons but Koch shikaris know the birds as *pogoma*, a name used for them also in Chittagong and Assam. The shikaris said that these birds used to be common, but are now only to be found in the neighbourhood of Mullickbāri on the east of the jungle. Presumably the birds referred to are *Ducula Aenea*; the green imperial pigeon.

The emerald dove, *Calcophaps Indica*, is a beautiful resident of the deeper parts. As the cold weather draws to an end and water becomes scarcer these shy birds seem to get tamer, and on a dry March evening I have seen as many as a dozen come down to drink at an old tank in the middle of the jungle. The Indian blue rock pigeon (*Columba Intermedia*) is common here as everywhere, and among doves the rufous turtle dove (*Turtur Orientalis*), the spotted dove (*T. Suratensis*), the Indian ring dove (*T. Risorius*) and the red turtle dove (*Oenopeplia Tranquebarica*), are all found.

Snakes.

The cobra (*gokhur*) is fortunately somewhat rare in Mymensingh. The commonest poisonous snake is the banded krait easily distinguished by its broad black and yellow bands. The kraif is also found and is usually spoken of as the *dhomun*. This snake is difficult to identify, as it is susceptible to much variation of colour and resembles a harmless snake (*Lycodon Aulicus*). A poisonous water snake *Hydroptus Nigrovinctus*, distinguishable by its flat tail, is reported to be common in the Meghna, where it is at times captured in the fishermen's nets. Its colour is greenish olive encircled by about 50 black rings. Pythons have been killed in Mymensingh town. Lizards and *guisaps* of all sizes inhabit patches of jungle even in the towns. Crocodiles occasionally appear in the Brahmaputra, and they are common in the Jinjiram and some of the tributaries of the Meghna.

Fish.

Fisheries are dealt with in the chapter on occupations. Most of the rivers and *bils* swarm with fish, and as soon as a drop of rain has fallen fishing also goes on in every paddy field and ditch. Taylor devotes several pages to a description

of the fish of Dacca, and it would be waste of space to give a list of the fishes found. All information can be had in Mr. K. C. De's report of 1910. The fish most favoured for eating are the *rohit*, *katal*, *mirka* and *baus*, all *Cyprinidae* which grow to a large size in big rivers—one maund is said to be the record for one fish—the *sing*, *boal* and *gaura* among the *Siluridae*, the *chital* (*Mystus Chitala*) and the *Phyasa* or Indian herring. Mullets are to be found in shoals near the banks of the shallow *khâls* of Khâliajuri. They swim on the surface like frogs. *Hilsa* are chiefly imported, being caught in the Meghna and Jamuna below the confines of this district. The *mâhseer*, which resembles the salmon, is caught in the Someswari and occasionally in the Jamuna, where it commands a very heavy price with the natives. Prawns, (*chingri*) sometimes reaching a very large size, come to Mymensingh in great numbers by train.

The temperature continues uniform from the middle of February to October, the average maximum falling from 91° in April to 86° in October. The highest average minimum temperature is 78° in July, August and September, and the mean temperature is almost constant at 82°. In 1874 it was 83.66. The average minimum temperature falls to 53° in January and the mean temperature to 64°.

The monsoon rainfall begins in June, but there are often as many wet days in April and May as in either July or August. Owing to the ascensional motion of the monsoon current caused by the Gârî Hills the rainfall is heavier than in other inland districts of Bengal.

The total fall is usually between 85 and 100 inches, but 134 inches were recorded in 1865, and 57 only in 1883. The rainfall is very unevenly distributed between the months in different years, e.g., in 1912 the heaviest was 26.38 in June, 24.19 in August and 17.97 in April. In 1914 September was the wettest month, May the next, and June and July only gave 5.91 and 9.65 inches respectively. In 1913 June again had, the heaviest rainfall, April and March having less than 2 inches each. October varies from 9.28 to 4.42 and November may have 5.74 as in 1912, or nothing at all.

Owing to the constant rain and the high winds it is not unusual to have cooler weather in April and May than in February and March. The nights seldom get hot before the end of May, and in the autumn months there is nearly always a cool breeze from the east or south-east. In spite of the high degree of humidity Mymensingh is much cooler than any of the districts of the Rajshâhi Division.

CHAPTER II.

HISTORY.

SOME account of the changes which resulted in Mymensingh becoming a separate district in 1786 will be found in the Chapter on General Administration. Until that date the history of Mymensingh is the history of Dacca. In this Gazetteer therefore only a brief skeleton of the earlier history of Eastern Bengal will be given, so as to keep all available space for the history of parganas. Mymensingh was never the seat of any line of princes, and the only places within its boundaries that are at all prominent in the ancient records are Agarasindur and Sherpur.

The first Aryan settlers in Bengal confined themselves to the valley of the Ganges. At the time of the *Mahabharata* Mymensingh formed part of Prāgjyotish, which 3,000 years later in Buddhist times was known as Kāmrup. The western boundary of Kāmrup was the Karatoya, a river which still runs out of Nepal parallel to the Atrai through Rangpur and Pābna; so the present bed of the Jamuna and considerable strips of the Rājshāhi division districts as well as the northern parganas of Mymensingh must have been included in Kāmrup.

The difficulty is with the southern limits. According to the *Jogini Tantra*, as also Abul Fazal, the author of the *Ain Akbāri*, the confluence of the Brāhmaṇaputra and the Lakshya rivers was the southern boundary of Kāmrup, and Gladwin puts this down as near the Ekdāla shown in Rennell's map on the bank of the Bānār river. This view is consistent with those authorities who include all parts of Mymensingh south of the old Brāhmaṇaputra in the kingdom of Varendra or North Bengal, which adjoined Kāmrup on the west. Fergusson, for example, says that the Pāla kings, with Gaur in Malda as their capital, were ruling east of the Karatoya long after Bengal had been subdued by the Sens. Gait also in his History of Assam speaks of the whole of the country between these rivers as the Matsya Desh,* which may or may not have been an outlying part of

* Matsya Desh, according to the Mahabharata, is a place south of Indraprastha or Delhi. *Vide* map, Royal Asiatic Society.

Varendra, but was certainly not part of Kāmrup. Dr. Taylor and others think that the Dhaleswari, which was the oldest channel of the Ganges, and the Buriganga on which Dacca lies were the boundary, and in that case the whole of Tangāil and the Madhupur Jungle were included in Kāmrup. This view would leave little room for Banga, the kingdom of the Sens which lay between Varendra and the Meghna. If in 650 A.D. the kingdom of Samatata comprised Tippera, Banga may have consisted of Faridpur, Bikrampur and the Sundarbans.

The earliest information about these kingdoms comes from the accounts of Thibetan and Chinese travellers in the 6th and 7th century after Christ. In their day Mymensingh was more Buddhist than Hindu. The old ruins, chiefly tanks in the Madhupur Jungle, are possibly of the eighth century and they are associated with the name of Bhaga Datta, who has sometimes been confused with the famous Kāmrup King of that name. Kāmrup was in its prime about 800 A.D. It ceased to be able to defend its outlying territories, and the Pāla kings of Panduā became the chief champions of Buddhism against the encroachments of the Hindu princes who had established themselves in various capitals in the Ganges valley. In the first quarter of the twelfth century the Pāla Rājā of Gaur found a new rival in Vijaya Sen, who had made himself a capital in Bengal. Vijaya Sen won a pitched battle, and his son Ballāl Sen set himself to consolidate the new kingdom. He was the founder of Kulinism, and there is evidence that he gave lands in Jamurki and Bhadra, two Tangāil villages, to some of the Brāhmans, whom it was his policy to settle as widely as possible throughout his dominions. The fact that Kulinism is much stronger in the west of the district than in the east goes to show that the parganas north and east of the Brāhmaputra were still under the influence of Kāmrup and its outlying Koch Chieftains. There is an old proverb "*Paschime Ballāli Purbe Masnad Ali*," which is still quoted against inhabitants of these parganas who boast of their family prestige.

The first Muhammadan inroads into Eastern Bengal were the work of independent bands with no authority from the Court of Delhi. There is a tradition that the very first Muhammadan settlement in Mymensingh was at Madanpur near Netrokona, where their leader, a saint called Shāh Sultān, lies buried. The inscription on his tomb has not been deciphered. His descendants are still called Khadem Fakīrs. The tomb of Pīr Shāh Jamāl is at Kāgmāri and that of a similar leader called Fābā Adam Kashmīri is at Atia. The first

emperor of Delhi who sent an army to Bengal was Kutubuddin, about 1212. In 1282 Bulbān himself took an army down the Brāhmaṇaputra as far as Sonārgāon. In 1299 we find Bāhādur Khān appointed Governor of Eastern Bengal. He declared himself independent in 1324, but the next emperor, Ghiāsuddīn Tughlak, defeated him and appointed Tātar Khān in his place.

In 1338 the armour-bearer Fakruddin declared himself king in place of his deceased master Bikram Khān, the Governor of Sonārgāon. His successor was Ilyas, and after him his son Sikandar. Both reigns are chiefly noted for invasions by the Delhi emperors in person and the sieges of the famous fort Ekdālā on the banks of the Bānār river, where the Sonārgāon Governors fled for refuge. A Hindu king, Rāja Kans, then supervened. He is said to have oppressed Islām, but his son Jalāluddin embraced the Muhammadan faith.

Husain Shāh reigned from 1494-1524, and was strong enough to make expeditions to Assam and to conquer a border kingdom of Kāmrup, the "Aso" of old maps. It had lands on both banks of the Brāhmaṇaputra from Karāibāri to Gauhāti; full accounts of these expeditions by a contemporary Persian writer are to be found in the Journals of the Asiatic Society.

Husain Shāh was succeeded by his son Nasrat Shāh, and Nasrat by Firoz. Mahmūd the next king was decisively beaten by Sher Shāh, who in 1539 defeated Humayun and ascended the throne of Delhi. To consolidate his conquest, this emperor, the first of the Afghans, is said to have made a trunk road from Sonārgāon to Upper India complete with stage bungalows and wells. After dividing Bengal into provinces he left Kāzi Fazilat as his Viceroy or Amir over all three provinces, Bihar, Orissa and Bengal. From 1553-1573 Bengal again became independent under Pathan rulers, but after the reign of Akbar all attempts at independence ceased. In 1579 the office of Dewān or finance minister was created to relieve the Viceroy, henceforth usually styled the Nāzim, of part of his responsibilities, and until the time of Murshid Kuli Khān these officials were both nominated by the Emperor and acted as a mutual check on each other's ambitions. In 1582 came the settlement of Todar Mal by which Bengal was divided into 19 sarkārs. Most of the parganas of Mymensingh fell within the sarkar of Bāzuha, which was assessed at 10 elephants, 1,700 cavalry, 45,300 infantry and 9,87,921 rupees. It included also many of the parganas of Rājshāhi, Dacca, Bogra and Pābna.

It was at this time that Isā Khān of Khijirpur, one mile from Nārāyanaganj, being defeated by the Emperor fled to

Kishorganj and, besieging a Koch Chieftain Lakhan in Jangalbāri, established himself there. He fought a famous battle with Mān Singh, the Emperor's general, and eventually won the favour of the Emperor and was given the 22 parganas as his reward. His family still survives in reduced circumstances at Jangalbāri and Haibatnagar. Isā Khan was the greatest of the 12 Bhuyas,* who took advantage of the weakness of the Imperial authority and the unruliness of the Afghan bands to carve out for themselves independent principalities in Bengal. Bhuya is the same word as Bhumik, and we have Shore's authority for saying that Bhumik and zamindar are the same. The title, being Hindu, may have come originally from the Gaur princes. The only other Bhuya who had any connection with Mymensingh was the first owner of the Bhawal estate, whose headquarters were at Bāligāon in the south of the Madhupur jungle.

In 1608 Islam Khān was made Viceroy and transferred the seat of Government from Rājmahal to Dacca. His general, Shuja Khān, won some signal victories against the Afghan prince of Orissa, who tried to invade Bengal in 1611. In his reign the festival of the Janmastami was inaugurated in honour of the goddess Lakshmi and the god Narayan, for whose idols, brought from Durgapur, a new temple was built at Dacca in 1613.

Kasim Khān his brother, the next Viceroy, failed to do anything against the Portuguese under Gonzales, who established himself in the island Sandwip. He was succeeded by Ibrahim Khan, who was slain in a battle with Shāh Jahān. The latter, after an unsuccessful revolt against his father the Emperor Jahāngir, established himself in Orissa and then, advancing northwards, made himself master of Burdwān and of Dacca, where the accumulated Government treasure was at this time 40 lakhs of rupees.

Shāh Jahān was ruler of Bengal for two years. After his defeat by the imperial armies, Dacca remained under some insignificant viceroys till Shāh Jahān, himself becoming emperor on the death of Jahāngir, appointed one Kāsim Khan Jobuny in 1628. In the next viceroyalty of Azim Khān the English obtained their first farmān dated 2nd February 1634 allowing them to trade in Bengal. Islam Khān Mushedi captured Chittagong and also engaged in a successful campaign in Assam, twice defeating Baldeo, the rebel prince of Koch Hajong.

* Wise—Bara Bhuyas of E. B., J. A. S. B., 1874, Vol. 40.

Sultan Shah Shuja succeeded him and again transferred the seat of government to Rājmahāl. He was drowned in Arracan, where he had fled for refuge after an unsuccessful revolt against Aurangzeb. During his time the British, largely through the good offices of Surgeon Broughton, who had made himself useful to the imperial family, gained largely increased facilities for trade. Mir Jumla, the successful general of Aurangzeb, established his headquarters at Dacca as viceroy, conquered Cooch Behar and then engaged in a great campaign against Assam. He was popular as well as able, and his death in 1663 was regretted by all factions.

Shaista Khān was Nawāb or viceroy for two separate periods (1664-1677 and 1679-1689). During this period Dacca reached its prime. Owing to the system of export duties all provisions were very cheap and the western gate was closed to commemorate the fact that rice fell to the record price of 640 lbs. to the rupee, and the people were so prosperous that labour was difficult to hire. He abolished monopolies, and in the lands of his own jāigir ordered the refund to ryots of all moneys paid in excess of the fixed revenue. Shaista Khān was engaged in several conflicts with the Company's fleet which attacked Chittagong, but in spite of the bad reputation he incurred with the Company's servants, trade made great progress and his successor, Nawāb Ibrahim Khān, found it politic to allow the Company to reoccupy all their factories. The revolt of Subha Singh, a zamindar of Burdwān, and the failure of the viceroy to prevent the disturbance spreading, was the excuse under which the Dutch strongly fortified Chinsura, the French Chandernagore and the English Calcutta. When the Emperor heard of the revolt he appointed his grandson Prince Azīm-us-shan to the united Governments of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, and in the meantime sent the Nawāb's son Zabardast Khan against the rebels. The rebellion came to an end with the death of Rahim Shah, who headed the rebels after the death of Subha Singh in 1698, but Azim was not a strong man and soon became jealous of the power of Murshid Kuli Khan, whom Aurangzeb himself had appointed as Dewān in Dacca. An ineffectual attempt was made to assassinate Murshid Kuli, who sent a report to the Emperor and then moved his residence to Murshidabad. The Emperor severely reprimanded his grandson and made him move his headquarters to Bhiar; his second son Farrukh Siyar, under the superintendence of Sher Baluṇd Khan, was left as Deputy Nāzim in Dacca.

In spite of several changes of emperors, some of whom he had personally injured, Murshid Kuli Khān was successful in keeping his appointment as Dewān and subsequently as Viceroy of the three provinces until his death in 1724. He was a splendid financier, and under his administration the province of Bengal, while still maintaining its own standing army, became a source of profit to the Delhi exchequer. After the death of Murshid Kuli Khān the post of Nāzim or Nawāb, as the Viceroy of Bengal was now generally called, tended to become hereditary, and he appointed the Dewān and Naib or Deputy Dewāns. Murshid Kuli was succeeded by his son-in-law Shujāuddin Khān, who had hitherto been Deputy Dewān in Orissa. He had a strong council, including Alivardi Khan and Jaswant Rai, and the province enjoyed such prosperity that the price of rice again fell to 640 lbs. per rupee and the western gate closed by Shaista Khan was reopened. Shujā however, as he grew old, left affairs to his less capable son Sarfaraz Khan and a greedy batch of ministers. Their quarrels ended in a revolt by Alivardi Khan, who killed Sarfaraz Khan in battle. The new Governor's best years were taken up with campaigns against the Mahrattas, who between 1741 and 1754 continually invaded Orissa and Bengal. His grandson and successor, Sirajuddaula, hated the English, but was neither brave enough nor clever enough to press the quarrel to a successful issue. His capture of Calcutta in 1756 and the murder of the European residents in the Black Hole were avenged by the battle of Plassy in the next year.

After the death of Sirajuddaula the resulting anarchy led to the English Company making themselves responsible in 1765 for the revenues and civil administration of Bengal. Mahāmad Reza Khān was the Deputy Dewān under the Company in Murshidabad, and at their instigation Jasarat Khan was appointed Naib Nāzim in Dacca. A member of Council was sent to Dacca under the title of Chief, and, as in the days of Murshid Kuli Khan, before he was formally appointed Viceroy, the Dewān was the *de facto* Nāzim. In theory the Company still held the districts specially ceded to them as zamindars on payment of revenue to the Nāzim, and in the rest of the country they carried on through native agencies the traditional functions of the Dewan. In 1769 a Superintendent of Revenue was appointed, and in 1774 Middleton replaced Reza Khan as Deputy Dewan. Though 1779 was the date of Rennell's survey, the country was still far from settled. The difficulty of communication and the impossibility of moving troops

quickly in a country destitute of roads and everywhere cut up by rivers and *khāls* gave the European officials little chance of coping immediately with the outlaws and dacoits who preyed on the trade of the unwarlike residents of the towns. Henceforth the only historical events of any interest connected with Mymensingh are the inroads of the Gāros described in the history of the Sherpur Pargana, and the rebellion of the Sanyāsis. These people are described in a long minute of John Elliot, dated 29th April 1789, to the Board of Revenue, as in reality usurers, disguised as religious friars. The following description from the pen of Warren Hastings himself in a letter to Josias De Pre, dated 9th March 1773, is found in Creig's Memoirs :—

"Our own province has worn something of a warlike appearance this year, having been infested by a band of sanyasis, who have defeated two small parties of Perganah sepoys (a rascally corps), and cut off the two officers who commanded them. One was Captain Thomas, whom you know. Four battalions of the brigade sepoys are now in pursuit of them, but they will not stand any engagement and have neither camp equipage, nor even clothes, to retard their flight. Yet I hope we shall yet make an example of some of them, as they are shut in by rivers which they cannot pass when closely pursued.

"The history of the people is curious. They inhabit or rather possess the country lying south of the hills of Thibet, from Cabul to China. They go mostly naked; they have neither towns, houses nor families; but rove continuously from place to place, recruiting their number with the healthiest children they can steal in the country through which they pass. Thus they are the stoutest and most active men of India. Many are merchants. They are all pilgrims, and held by all castes of Gentoos in great veneration. This infatuation prevents our obtaining any intelligence of their motions, and aid from the country against them, notwithstanding very rigid orders which have been published for these purposes, in so much that they often appear in the heart of the province as if they dropped from heaven. They are hardy, bold and enthusiastic to a degree surpassing credit. Such are the sanyasis, the gypsies of Hindustan.

"We dissolved all the Perganah sepoys and fixed stations of the brigade sepoys on our frontiers, who are to be employed only in the defence of the provinces, and to be relieved every three months. This, I hope, will secure the peace of the country against future irruptions, and as they are no longer to be

employed in the collections, the people will be rid of the oppressions of our own plunderers."

The following extracts from the Board's correspondence with the officials of the Dacca Division are also worth reprinting at length.

No. 66 of 8th November 1784.—"I have taken every precaution to prevent Mujnooshaw's molesting any of the parganas to the eastward of this division, having stationed a complete company of the Sebandy corps at Mustanagar, which is a little to the north-east of Sherpur and which must be his route should his intention lead him to this district. In the event of Mr. Champion's application to me for sepoys, I shall supply them and afford him every assistance, etc., etc."

No. 19 of 18th January 1790.—"A large body of sanyasis have entered the province under the conduct of Cherag Aly and other Fakirs belonging to Mudgooshaw and Mongur, sanyāsis. They come from a place called Mustunghur in the neighbourhood of Dinajpur and pursued an unfrequented road till their arrival at Jaffarshye belonging to the Momensingh Perganah, where they have erected their standard, and are increasing their force by various emissaries who have been in the province for some time. They have not as yet commenced their depredations, except in plundering some of the houses of the inhabitants of Jaffarshye, who fled at their approach, I wrote to Capt. Mackenzie the moment the intelligence reached me, who has ordered a party which leaves Dacca to-morrow morning under the command of a European officer. Previous to delivering over charge to Mr. Buller it was my intention to set off for Belluah to-morrow, but I now await his lordship's order."

No. 15a of 4th July 1782.—(Vakeels on the part of the zamindars of parganas Mymensingh, Alapsing and Sherpur) : "Our zemindars are quite desolated for the extortions of the Sanyasis and other Mehergins, for which 100 sepoys were previously ordered to be sent from Jehangirnagore, but the chief did not attend to the orders, and Mr. Lodge, who was directed to proceed to the mofussil, having taken his residence at Jessore, has not yet gone into our parganas and in consequence the sanyasis have become very much disturbing, the ryots daily quitting their habitations to the great loss of public revenue. Rooder Chand Choudhury of Mymensingh, having gone to the cutcherry of Jaffarsing to look after the collection, was attacked by Bibhootgueer and other sanyasis, who wanted to stab him with a cutter, but were prevented by the

interposition of a number of people he had assembled. Many others of the zemindars have left their homes to avoid them. It was formerly the custom to have sepoys stationed in our parganas to protect the inhabitants, but since the mehal has been huzzoory there have been none : wherefore we request you will appoint a Captain and 200 men with ammunition to prevent such disturbances in future.

" Nothing but a strong military force residing here constantly will prevent the sanyasis committing acts of violence, and when this force should at any period be withdrawn, they will adopt measures to enforce payment of what they deem themselves mostly entitled to. They have hitherto resided for many years in these parganas upon the footing of money-lenders and maintain themselves upon the interest from their several capitals, which they have from time to time advanced to the zemindars to make up the deficiency of their revenue kists to Government.

From Henry Lodge to Board :—" 60 of the sepoys commanded by the jemadar have had a skirmish with Shaw Mudginoo at Chatterkaith, about 8 or 10 acres from Junatpur towards the Ran Bowahl Pargana. Mudginoo, after having had 25 or 30 of his men shot dead and double the number or thereabout wounded, fled into the jungles ; a pursuit would have been imprudent as the sepoys had expended their ammunition. Indeed, the jungles are so immensely thick and of such an extent that there was little probability of the sepoys coming up with Mudginoo, who had the advantage of having a bazar with him, whilst I was under the necessity of supplying the sepoys with rice, etc. I have still hopes of apprehending the notorious robber, and request your permission to employ 100 burkandazes for the space of two months. One sepoy was killed and four others much wounded in the action."

From the above and other extracts it will appear that the sanyāsis like the Kashmir merchants of to-day got the poor ryots into their hands by loans of money at ruinous rates of interest, direct and indirect : but they did not confine their dealings to the ryots ; they lent also to the zamindars and, when their clients could not pay, they banded together, plundered their houses and sold their children into slavery. They carried off zamindars and their agents on boats until they leased whole villages or paid their demands. Later on they developed into brigands, pure and simple, and attacked the zamindars in their own cutcherries, plundering the treasures and burning the homesteads.

This state of affairs was largely due to the famine of 1770, which crippled the zamindars. The Collectors were so few and so far away that the complaints which the sanyāsis took care should not come in too easily or too freely were long in bringing about strong action. The sanyasis under Shaw Mudginoo fortified places in the Madhupur Jungle and at Jamālpur (then called Sanyāsiganj) in 1781, but it was not until 1782 that Mr. Henry Lodge with a body of soldiers camped at Baiganbāri with a view to checking their depredations. Not till 1784 could he raise sufficient reinforcements to take the field, and after a petty battle the two chief leaders, Shaw Mudginoo and Shaw Majrad, left the district. The cantonments were now permanently established at Jamālpur, where they remained till after the Mutiny. There was a similar outpost at Sherpur on the opposite side of the Brahmaputra, which was then 7 or 8 miles broad in the rains.

In 1786 Mudginoo returned to ravage Sherpur, Alapsingh and Mymensingh Parganas, and Sir Patrick Balfour of the 4th regiment of sepoys was ordered by the Chief of Dacca to send a company to help Lodge at Jamālpur. In spite of this the sanyāsis were strong enough to hold some Sherpur zamindars to ransom, and Elliot, the Commissioner, was balked in an attempt to arrest the leader Donaglin by a display of force. He had to resort to stratagem by setting up one leader against the other, and it was not until the establishment of the separate district of Mymensingh under Wroughton as Collector made itself felt, that the trouble quieted down.

In 1791 there were fresh disturbances of the peace, due to the Buxar burkandāzes of the Sherpur zamindars carrying off the 9 annas proprietor and looting his cutcherry. Mr. Bayard (Collector) sent sepoys, who rescued the landlord from the Korāibāri Hills and arrested Hirji, the leader. The Korāibāri zamindars were quarrelling with Sherpur about their respective boundaries, and they joined with the remnants of Hirji's band, again looted the Sherpur cutcherry with 300 armed men and carried off the 7 annas landlord. Bayard could not effect a rescue this time, and the matter went up to the Governor-General in Council, who succeeded in compelling the release of the landlord by the Rāja of Korāibāri.

In 1807 a separate Magistrate's court was established at Kaliganj-Sherpur to check the unruliness on the borders. In 1812 a Gāro Safati tried to make an independent principality at the foot of the hills in Susung. He met the Collector at

Mymensingh, and Le Gros recommended his recognition by Government, but the Board rejected it.

In 1823 the Rungpur Light Infantry was stationed at Jamālpur and had to deal with a revolt of the tenants of Sherpur under one Tipu Garo, which was due to the oppressions of the zamindars. Tipu was arrested and sentenced to imprisonment for life.

The Mutiny hardly touched Mymensingh at all. The Magistrate made preparations to defend Mymensingh against a small body of 50 armed rebels, but they went past in the direction of Jamālpur without offering fight.

Archæology.

The ruins of an old mud fort are still visible at Garh Jaripa, 8 miles north-west of Sherpur. It covers about 1,100 acres and was encompassed by seven successive walls, each 45 feet high and 75 feet broad with a moat between each pair and outside the seventh. The sites of the four gates are still locally identified, as the Kām Darāj on the east, Pāndidarāj on the west, the Sāmsērdarāj or reception gate on the south and the Khirki darāj (private gate) on the north. There was a boat-shaped island in a lake outside the water gate called by some Kosha and by others Dinga, which was used as a pleasure garden. This lake, as well as several ponds within the fort, were filled up during the earthquake of 1897. A Koch temple stood near the Khirki gate. It was converted into a mosque, but a fair in honour of Dalip's mother is still held here every Baishak. The fort was built as a protection against Gāros by Dālip Samanta, but the Muhammadans took possession about 1370. The tombstone of their leader, Majlis Shāh Humāyun, with an inscription in Tughra Arabic, was sent to the Museum of the Asiatic Society, Calcutta, in 1871, by the late Babu Har Chandra Chaudhuri of Sherpur. The lands within the inner wall were re-leased as valid *lākhirāj* in 1835, and now belong to Rai Rādha Ballabh Chaudhuri Bahadur.

The big mosque at Atia, Tangāil, was built in 1609 by Sayed Khān Pani in honour of the great Pīr Ali Shāhenshah Bābā Kashmīri. The inscription on the tomb shows that the saint died in 1507. There is another old mosque in the Bengali style, which, according to local tradition, was built by Ghysuddin Azam Shāh. A ruined brick tomb in front of this mosque is pointed out as the burial place of this Sultan.

The village of Agārasindur on the Brāhmaputrā river opposite Kāorāid contains an ornamental mosque with a large dome supported by four hexagonal buttresses. It has been cracked in places and is overgrown with jungle. There is a stone slab

over the doorway with an inscription dated 1640. Close by are the remains of the fort where, as described in the history of Hazrādi pargana, Isā Khān was besieged by Mān Singh.

The Dargāh of Shāh Kamal at Durmut.—Mr. Donough, Subdivisional Officer, Jamālpur, translated a Bengali pamphlet which gives Shāh Kamal's date as 1503, A.D. He came from Multān, where he saved the place from the encroachment of the river by forcing the devils to give up their spades. The same Shāh Kamal is associated with the Dargāh just across the Gāro Hill border, where both Hindus and Mahammadans do *pūja*. A procession is formed once a year to wash his *chhorā*, or knife, upon which only his descendants may look without harm.

The temple of Lakshmi Narāyan at Kishorganj, consisting of 21 pinnacled structures, together with a Jaltāngi (summer house), Rāsbāri, Durgāh Mandir, Sib Mandir and other smaller buildings was erected in 1770, A.D., by one Nanda Kishore Prāmānik, who rose to affluence in the flourishing days of the muslin industry. It covered an area of 9,000 square feet and contained two inscriptions in Sanskrit, but everything except the Jaltāngi was destroyed in the earthquake of 1897. The four tanks connected with it, including one 265 yards by 142 yards, were excavated by local labourers, at the cost of their food only, during the great famine of 1769, A.D.

CHAPTER III.

THE PEOPLE.

Census results.

THE population of Mymensingh at the last census in 1911 was 4,526,422, giving a density of 724 to the square mile. In Dacca it is 1,066, in Tippera 972, Faridpur 824, Noakhali 792, Pabna 772, the 24-Parganas 502 and Midnapore 544. Parts of Tangail and Kishorganj are as thickly populated as any thana of Dacca except Bikrampur, but the jungly stretches in the Madhupur jungle, Fulpur and Durgapur thanas and the wide haors or marshes in the river area to the east take off greatly from the average figures. While Nandail, Katiadi and all the thanas of the Tangail subdivision except Gopalgur and Sarisabari have a density of over 1,000, Gafargao falls to 428 and Durgapur to 333.

The percentage of increase between 1901 and 1911 was 15·53 and between 1891 and 1901 12·75. No figures before 1891 are reliable. The first census in 1872 gave the population as 2,354,794. The increase is well distributed, being greatest in the Sadar subdivision and in Netrokona thana. The low percentage of increase in the Nagarpur and Tangail thanas is attributed to a cholera outbreak in 1905 and to the prevalence of malaria. In Sarisabari thana the cutting of the Jamuna has caused the figures to remain stationary.

There are a large number of up-country coolies and servants in the district, who come for the cold weather and the jute season and return every year. Many of them have brought their families and are now domiciled. Practically all sweepers, palki-bearers and other non-agricultural menials have come from other districts either in this or the previous generation. The total immigrants are shown in the census as 161,395, and this number is nearly counterbalanced by the 156,993 persons enumerated in other districts who gave their birth-place as Mymensingh. The latter are chiefly cultivators who have gone from Tangail and Jamalpur to settle in the Goalpara chars of the Brahmaputra. Males exceed females by 152,784, which probably means that emigrants for the most part take their families with them, whereas the immigrants leave theirs behind. The children under 11 number 1,522,569. Of the

remaining population 74 per cent. of the Hindus are married or widowed, and 78 per cent. of the Muhammadans. Among the Hindus 6,256 children under 11 are married and 16,883 among the Muhammadans. There are 109 widows under five years of age.

The Muhammadans form nearly three-quarters of the whole population. In Dacca the proportion is less than half and only Bākarganj and Chittagong of the Bengal districts, compare in this respect with Mymensingh.

In the census tables Musalmāns are divided into 55 castes, but they are not so much castes as social divisions. Apart from Sheikhs under which designation 31,922,986, or 93 per cent. of the whole are enrolled, only Nāgarchies, Nikāries, Pāthāns, Kulus, Māhifarashs, Jolāhās (commonly known as Kārigars), Khāns, Dāis, Bediyas appear in any appreciable number.

The Māhifarash caste are fishermen and the Nikāries deal in fish. Ordinarily Muhammadans are not allowed to live by selling fish or milk, and all the fishermen, goālas, dhobies, barbers and most of the artisans are Hindus. The Kulus are the Telis or oil workers of the Muhammadans and the Jolāhās, of which there are some 2,400 in the district, are weavers. The Dāis, though not numerous, are sufficiently scattered to supply midwives to the whole community. Near Kendua there is a particular caste called Gāins who trade as pedlars, chiefly by boat, and are supposed to come from Persia originally.

The inhabitants of Kendua mauza, some 3 miles from the thāna of that name, are called Baigars, Baijees or Samājies. They own the whole village as tenants, but the profession of all the daughters without exception is dancing, singing and prostitution, whereas the men engage in cultivation and marry women from other villages, who indulge in none of the habits of their sisters-in-law, though occupying a separate portion of the same homestead. Some families are quite well off and have quite substantial bāris. The first Samājies are said to have been settled at Kendua by the Haibatnagar zamindārs. They have been living there as Muhammadans for over 300 years and in the Thāk the village is described as a Chāfi-Bādshāhi Datta Lākherāj.

The other so-called castes are really surnames and only in some cases show the origin of the family. The Pāthāns and Khāns are in theory descendants of the Afghāns or other up-country followers of the Delhi generals, who fought in Bengal before the English rule. As a matter of fact the title

Khān has been adopted by many of the more recent converts from other religions. Saiyads are nominally the descendants of the Prophet.

Sheikh merely means Sardār or leader, and covers the vast majority of the Muhammadan cultivators whether descended from Hindu converts or from the original conquerors of Bengal.

Mr. J. P. Wise in his notes on the Muhammadans of Bengal says that until the census of 1872 it was not known that Muhammadans predominated in Eastern Bengal and that most of the conversions date from the reign of Jalāluddīn (1414 to 1430) who was the only real persecutor of the Hindus. He attributes many of the conversions to a desire to avoid punishment for murder or caste offences, and a religion which proclaimed all men to be equal must have considerable fascination for the lower caste of Hindus. Present day Muhammadans repudiate this idea, and point out that many of the best Hindu families have Muhammadan branches. Isā Khān, the premier nobleman of Bengal, and Jalāluddin himself were the sons of Brāhmans, and the Susung family at one time professed the Muhammadan faith. Setting aside differences in dress and the way of wearing the hair, it is impossible to distinguish between Muhammadans and Hindus by physique, complexion or type of features, but the extent to which Hindu ceremonies survive among the more ignorant Muhammadans has perhaps been exaggerated by those who ascribe the majority of the conversions to force or worldly motives.

Strictly speaking, only Shias observe the Muharram, but many Sunnis and Hindus take part in the holiday and enjoy the noise, just as Muhammadans join in the Dūrgā Pūja procession and the Manasā Pūja boat races.

The Fateha ceremony of the Muhammadans is quite their own, but observers have confused it with the Srādha ceremony of the Hindus, and Muhammadans do sometimes give a feast on the fortieth day from their relations' death. The practice of observing the sixth day from a child's birth and the seventh month of pregnancy by giving presents has been imitated from the Hindus even by Muhammadans whose homes are in other provinces. If at one time it was at all common for Muhammadans to wash their pots and matresses on Lakshmi Pūja day and to put on clean clothes after the Dūrga Pūja, the practice has died out since the partition. On the other hand Hindus sometimes make offerings at the mosque after winning a case or when their cows first give milk.

The habit of joining the Dol Jātra or "Holi" festival is entirely going out. Superstitions like not setting out on a journey when a lizard falls from the roof are probably common to all religions.

Circumcision is not practised generally by the Muhammadans of Netrakona and Iswarganj.

Coming to sects as opposed to castes, all the Muhammadans of Mymensingh are Sunnis. Though the Nawabs of Dacca were Shias from 1702 to 1843, it was never recognised as the religion of the ruling class, and the only trace it has left in this district is the observance of the Muhamarram. J. P. Wise divides the Sunnis of his day into four subsects, Sabiqui, Farāzi, Tāaiyāni and Rafiyadain, The last are chiefly weavers and hide merchants in the Tangāil subdivision. They are a Puritan sect, very particular about keeping their women in *parda* and they profess to look down upon the other Sunnis and to be more particular about truthfulness and prayer. They avoid marriage with other sects.

The Tāaiyāni school following Kerāmat Ali never gained ground in this district, though according to Wise they comprised the majority of Dacca cultivators in his time.

The Farāzi sect were founded by Hāzi Shariatullah of Farīdpur after a 20 years' pilgrimage to Mecca. He taught non-observance of Friday prayers and of the two great Ids and Muhamarram on the ground that India was not a Moslem country. He required from all *Tauba*, or penitence for past sins, and discouraged music at marriages and offerings to the dead.

His son Dudhu Miya born in 1819 organised Bengal into circles and established a Khalifa in each. In defence of his adherents he came to blows with the zamindārs and collected *lathials*. He was committed to the Sessions on a charge of murder in 1841, but was acquitted. Later he pillaged an indigo factory and 62 of his followers were convicted, but acquitted on appeal to the Sadar Adālat.

At one time he had many followers in Mymensingh, but they are now chiefly confined to the Jamuna *deara*.

The term Sabiqui referred to those undoubted converts from Hinduism, who still observed many Hindu customs and rituals. Most of them now belong to the Hānifi school and are discouraged by their Maulvis and Mollahs from attending Hindu festivals even as spectators.

A more usual classification of the Muhammadans divides them into four sects (1) Hānifis, (2) Shafāis, (3) Mālikis and (4) Hānbālis, but only the Hānifis occur in this district to any

extent. These four subsects follow the instructions of the four greater Imāms, whereas the Wahābis, a later development, of whom the Farāzis and the Rafiyadains are the best known, only recognise the precepts of the Prophet as handed on by his companions.

There is very little real Pīr or Saint worship in the district, though the tombs of prominent Fakīrs are regarded as holy places. Miskim Shāh is a favourite Pīr in Gafargāon thāna, and his tomb at Mukhi near Moshākhāli is the scene of an annual fair. The shrine of Pīr Shāhenshah at Atia is a place of pilgrimage and that of Shāh Afzal Māmud in Serājganj is revered by the Muhammadans and Marwāries of the northern thānas of the Tangāil subdivision. In Jamālpur Durmut and Madārganj there are shrines associated with the name of Shāh Kamal.

Madan Pīr has a famous shrine in Netrakona subdivision, and birds are popularly supposed not to fly over this shrine. In Joānshāhi Kutub Sāhib is all powerful, and round Astagrām no cultivator dare yoke cows to a plough. His mosque at Astagrām is richly supported by votive offerings, and has been taken over by the Archaeological Department.

Mounds of earth with five crests on them, representing the "Pānch Pīr" are ubiquitous especially under big baniyan trees. Offerings of milk are made by persons registering vows. The Pīr Gāzi Miya protects his worshippers in the Madhupur Jungle from tigers. Sailors pray to Khāwajeh Khizir and Pīr Badar, but there are not many professional mānjhis indigenous to the district.

Except the very aged and infirm all Muhammadans observe the Ramjān rigorously at the cost of considerable injury to their health and work. This fasting in the case of growing boys at school may partially account for the backwardness of Muhammadans in the public services. Other festivals generally observed are the Shababarāt and the two Ids. The isolated group of three *pukka* steps to be seen in the open fields all over the country are used by the leaders of the prayers only on the Iduzzoha. All respectable cultivators say their prayers five times a day throughout the year and attend the local mosque at midday on Friday.

Hindus.

All the well-known castes of Hindus are represented in the district. Most of the zamindārs belong to Brāhmaṇ or Kayastha families, and the villages in Netrakona and Kishorganj containing the ancient seats of Hindu bhadrālok families are extremely numerous. Ballāl Sen's elaborate organisation of Kulinism did not leave its mark on Mymensingh as it did

on Dacca, but the portion of the district west of the Brahmaputra has several families who trace descent from the five Vedic Brāhmans who were imported by Adisur in 732 A. D. in the hope of purifying the religion of the earlier Brāhman settlers. The families of so-called Kulin Kayasthas who accompanied the original Kulins from Kanauj are strongly represented in the Ghoses, Boses, Guhas, Mitras and Dattas of the Tangāil subdivision.

Most people supposed until recently that the custom of *Sati* had died out, but there was a case at Nandāil in 1913, the widow of a settlement muharrir who died of cholera being the victim. Since then several cases have been reported in the Calcutta papers.

Of the lower castes Binds number 1,580, Chamārs 6,800, Dālus 4,800, Dhabās 17,000, Doms 1,500, Dosāds 1,800, Gandhabaniks 5,600, Goālas 25,600, Jogis 46,000, Kāhārs 5,000, Kaibarttas 130,000, Kāmārs 13,000, Kāpālies 16,000, Kumhars 22,000, Māls 21,000, Malis 5,900, Malos 38,900, Muchis 26,600, Namasudras 28,000, Pātnis 24,000, Rājbansies 23,000, Shāhas 56,000, Sudras 17,000, Sutradhars 32,000, Tantis 12,000, Telis 13,000, Tiyars 22,700. Of these the Rājbansis are the most distinctive. Even in Buchanan's time they assumed the sacred thread and claimed to be Kshattriyas who had fled from Orissa to escape the violence of the deity Parasurām. It is more probable that like the Koches they were an aboriginal tribe on the frontier of Bengal and Assam, and that their claim to a higher sounding name was based on as fictitious historical grounds as that of the Namasudras or Chandāls, and is merely the result of a laudable ambition to raise themselves in the social scale. At various times the Hadis, Koches, Malos, Kumhars and Pods have harassed the census and settlement authorities to conceal their legitimate names.

The Rājbansis are a particularly harmless and peaceable people and their submissiveness and industry make them excellent tenants.

One peculiarity of the district is the number of representatives of aboriginal tribes. Gāros number 38,000, Hadis 26,000, Hājangs 25,000, and Koches 32,000. They inhabit the Susung and Sherpur villages along the foot of the Garo Hills and are the pioneers of cultivation in the Madhupur Jungle. The Garos and Koches do not use the plough, but only the kodāli and they still prefer to cultivate virgin ground. After cutting the jungle and cultivating two or three crops they make way for a Muhammadan family and start over again. The Garos and the

Aboriginal tribes.

Hajangs are noted for their simplicity, and the impression their straightforwardness and truthfulness has made on the Hindu and Muhammadan officers, who have worked among them, is a striking commentary on the extent to which these people recognise the defects of their own co-religionists in this respect.

The Gāros are short but strongly built. The women wear short petticoats of blue and red home woven stuff instead of the *sari*, and the men hardly anything at all. They retain some, though not all, of the primitive customs of their cousins in the hills. They eat anything including dogs, but strangely enough refuse to touch milk, though close contact with other races is gradually removing this prejudice. Bidhāns usually consisting of fowls are offered to the household Gods or Dēos on the advice of the priest or "Densis" at marriages and deaths. They all speak some Bengali, and the Nāmdāli Gāros hardly understand the language of the hills. Some of them observe *Sradha* ceremonies.

All property descends through the female line with the result that the husband of the youngest daughter is the *de facto* owner of the family land and property. If his wife dies he is expected to marry another woman of the same motherhood or "Machang." If the "Nokma," as the holder of the life interest is called, dies before his wife, a "Nokram," who is by preference a son of his sister, is appointed, so that the control of the family property may not pass from the "Machang" of the deceased husband. The "Nokram" elect marries his uncle's daughters and the widow also when the uncle dies.

For further information about the Gāros, Major Playfair's monograph is to be found in all Collectorate libraries. On the evidence of language and their own traditions it is believed that they belonged to the Thibeto-Burman group of tribes speaking the Todo language. They are closely connected with the Kacharies of Danipur with whom they emigrated from Thibet to Assam about 400 A.D. Fights with the Assamese caused the Gāros to retreat across the Brahmaputra and after that they had little association with their late countrymen.

The Koches of Mymensingh are more closely related to the Gāros than to the Assamese caste of the same name, who are virtually Hinduized. It is probable that the Koches inhabited the whole of the Gāro Hills before the Gāro invasion and possibly they represent an earlier wave of immigration of the same Bodos.

The Hājangs are Hindus and do not wear any distinctive dress, but in features they are hardly to be distinguished from

the Gāros. They are said to have been imported to the Durgapur thāna by the Susung Rājas for Kheddah operations for which the local Bengalis were not fitted.

The Hadis are often bad characters and get on badly with their landlords. Like all aboriginal castes they are great drunkards, and this vice is gradually decimating the vigorous Mundāis, who are still common in the Madhupur Jungle.

There are Christian missions belonging to the Australian Baptists at Mymensingh, Tangāil and Durgapur and of the Oxford Mission at Haluāghāt. They are fairly successful with the Gāros and their schools are well attended. A large school for girl foundlings is maintained at Mymensingh.

The Bengali spoken in Tangāil and the west of the district Language. is fairly pure. In the eastern thānas it has assimilated some of the corrupt intonation of the Sylhet dialect, but the words used are much the same as elsewhere. Even in Jamālpur there are traces of Assamese idiom, e.g. the constant use of the word *lagē* or *lagibē*. Instead of the infinite in *bo* the verbal in *on* or *an* is used, "Jaon *lage*," you must go. The abbreviation of verbal suffixes is stereotyped and as a rule intelligible. Many people use a future ending in *mu*, *ba*, *bo* instead of *bo*, *be*, *be*, e.g. *jamu*, I will go, and another peculiarity is the suffix *ga* added to the past tense *gēchhē* to give emphasis. S is often pronounced as h and the aspirate is dropped in words like Hanumān.

The character of the Muhammadan masses is full of inconsistencies. They have for long been described as untruthful and dishonest, and it is well known that in the Courts it is thought to be the duty of a witness to say what suits his side. The man who speaks the truth against, not so much his own interest, as what may possibly turn out to be his interest, looks upon himself as a fool. Litigation and business, however, are regarded as games to which the rules of love and war apply. Among themselves the villagers know perfectly well when one of their members is lying and an investigating officer can usually get the benefit of their knowledge in an informal inquiry. There is always, however, an inherent suspiciousness to overcome, which seems to be more than the normal conservatism of the peasant. Even when a new scheme like co-operative banks is being initiated for their benefit, they are not satisfied with the word of one officer, they have to consult everybody within reach including his typewriter and chaprasi.

Inside their own communities they respect each other's rights and property, and have very few quarrels considering

the close contact entailed by the conditions of life in villages of which only a small portion is unflooded in the rains.

Village quarrels are usually due to factions led by ambitious and unscrupulous *māthbars*. When the *māthbars* are honest and tactful they can do what they like with the common herd. Often the poorest seem the most contented and happy and, if asked why they did not resist some aggression or take some step to ameliorate their lot, they give the invariable answer "Garib Admī," "I can neither read nor write, I must do what other people tell me."

They are easily excited and when they lose their heads take to breaking heads and shedding blood for trivial causes. They follow each other like sheep and the preachings of outside Mullās and Maulvies are at the bottom of most of the discontent that exists. Ordinarily the natives of the district are patient and humble to a degree. The looting of the Bazars at Dewānganj and Bakshiganj at the time of the Swadeshi agitation in 1907 is said to have marked the release of the Muhammadans from their old fear of the Hindus and to have given the first impulse to the clamour for education and a share in Government offices. This may have been the case in Dewānganj, where the ryots were deeply in debt and were only too glad to take advantage of the rumour that Government had authorised the pillage of Hindus to punish their Mahājans. Elsewhere there are many villages which successfully resisted their landlords long before 1908. That more did not follow their example is due not so much to timidity, as to an inability to combine and the fragility of their pride. It is not a severe beating but a beating with shoes, not starvation but the disgrace of forceable detention, sometimes even the mere threat of refusing a stool in the cutcherry, when he comes to pay his rent, which crows the Muhammadan cultivator into submission. The ryots' statement is often true that they have been forced into the execution of kabuliyyats, but the force required is so slight from the English point of view that in the hands of a clever landlord or nāib it never lays him open to legal proceedings.

Generally their submissiveness was more apparent than real. They were not interfered with and as long as their misfortunes were due to natural causes or to the despotism of "Dastur," they did not complain. But few people in the world can have so little idea of public duty and sense of obligation to the State. There would be very little submissiveness if their carts and animals and youth were impressed for war purposes

If a rate of rent has ruled for a long time they can be absolutely pig-headed and unreasoning in refusing to listen to all reasons why it should be enhanced and in Alapsingh, because their story of a 36-inch *gaj* was not listened to, they seriously hampered the progress of settlement by refusing to attend the *bujharat* of their own fields.

The ordinary ploughman or reaper shows no interest at all in strangers riding across his fields. It does not strike him that they may be there for his benefit, and in his turn he does not expect to be interfered with. He will not lay down his tools for two minutes to help a visitor across a ford or a broken bridge, and rather than show him 10 yards on his way he will say that he does not know the name of the next village. This may be due to laziness chiefly, but it illustrates their attitude of aloofness. At the same time there is a tradition of help from the Sarkār in old fashioned villages. A sudden intrusion into the homestead may be met by cries of "Dohāi Company" and sometimes "Dohāi Mahārāni." Even the better class house-holders seem to think that the touring officer is above the law and can give justice more summary or more equitable than the courts.

The people bear no grudge against the Courts who decide against their claims, recognising that it is the falsehoods of the opposite party and not the bias of the Courts that has caused their downfall.

One of their worst traits is their selfishness as regards public cow-paths and grazing grounds. No ryot will hesitate to fence in a new *bāri* even if it means blocking the approach for carts to several other homesteads and preventing the access to water of all the village cattle. No one who can get a *patta* for new land from a selfish landlord will stop to think that it means a reduction of the already perilously small grazing ground of the community. To the sufferings of dumb animals they are absolutely callous. Ten of them will ride on one *tikkagari* over the worst road and no sore can prevent their bullocks being yoked. The most diseased dog is left to starve or die of itself. On the other hand they bear pain themselves with considerable fortitude, and it is marvellous from what bad operations they can survive.

Their hospitality is beyond reproach and even the poorest householder will offer tobacco, *pān*, or a cocoanut or milk. Often the largest hut is the baithakkhāna, in which strangers can sleep.

CHAPTER IV.

PUBLIC HEALTH.

Vital Statistics.

DURING the last six years the death-rate in Mymensingh has varied from 20 to 22 per thousand and the birth-rate from 30 to 33. The birth-rate does not compare favourably with that of the other districts of the Dacca Division and still less with that returned by Rājshāhi, Nadia, Murshidabād and Noākhāli, where it exceeds 40 per mille. On the other hand the death-rate is much lower than in other districts: in Tippera the figure is about the same (21·37), but in Dacca it is 25·65 and in Faridpur and most of the other districts of Bengal it varies from 30 to 38. In the last century the Mymensingh death-rate was never reported as more than 29 per thousand, but comparison with old returns is vitiated by the imperfect and varying methods of registration. As regards mortality from different diseases, the Mymensingh percentage of deaths compares favourably with other districts, except perhaps in the case of small-pox: for fever it is only 14·10 as opposed to 17·96 in Dacca and 27 per mille in most of the districts of the Rajshāhi Division. Moreover many of the deaths which are attributed by the chaukidars to malaria are really cases of a low form of typhoid or pneumonia, which are liable to occur in any climate.

In spite, therefore, of the evil reputation which clings to Tangāil, Mymensingh must be considered one of the healthiest districts in the plains of India. Touring officers and others living in the Madhupur jungle, or camping near the foot of the Gāro Hills after the proper touring season, are liable to contract a particularly malignant type of fever, whose first symptoms are vomiting and severe pains in the limbs. Elsewhere attacks of fever are usually relapses brought on by wet weather in the cold season or sudden changes of temperature during the rains. The spleen index is low. Serious cases of malaria will nearly always be found to have been imported from other districts. The non-epidemic diseases most commonly met with are intestinal, respiratory and integumentary.

Cholera occurs every cold weather in an endemic form, but, Cholera. as the Civil Surgeon wrote in 1874, it does not prevail extensively or continue long in any one place nor is it usually virulent in type. Even at that time its periodical appearance in November was attributed to three causes, the eating of new *āman* rice, the storing of decayed fish which were caught in too great numbers during the subsidence of the floods to be consumed at once, and the contamination of every *khäl* and pool of water by steeping jute. In Tangāil serious epidemics of cholera are apt to break out in the rains as in 1900, 1905 and in 1915, and the difficulty of disposing of the dead, when all the country is under water, makes recurrence inevitable. In other parts of the district outbreaks may occur in April and May as well as at the beginning of the cold weather, but they are so localised that it would appear that cholera could be stopped entirely, if the people had even the most elementary ideas of sanitation and prevention. Cholera corpses are burnt on the edges of *bils* and dried up rivulets in all parts of Sadar, Kishorganj, and Netrakona, and the filthy pillows and bedding are never burnt along with the corpse, but left with the *kalsi* and half-burnt bamboos, a prominent object near many of the public ferries and roads.

In the old days small-pox was a serious plague and the practice of inoculation was responsible for many deaths. Vaccination has at last forced its way into general tolerance and serious outbreaks are not common.

In the 1872 Administration Report an outbreak of *Kälā-Azār* or *Kälā-Deo* was reported from the Sherpur Thānā. It is described as a remittent fever, not infectious but usually fatal.

In 1910 over 20 cases of *bēri bēri* were reported from houses near Mohanganj Bazaar in the Netrokona subdivision, but the disease was eventually put down as epidemic dropsy and there have been no further reports. Leprosy is perhaps more common than in other districts of Eastern Bengal, and occasional cases of elephantiasis are met with.

As the hospital returns for outdoor patients in every thana will show, the most common complaints are affections of the skin. At Bhairab dispensary in 1898, 9,568 persons were treated for skin diseases as opposed to 591 for rheumatism and kindred diseases, and 360 for malaria, and 148 for dysentery. At Jamālpur and Kendua skin diseases were also responsible for nearly one third the total number of patients. Up-country ferrymen and Bengali fishermen seem specially liable, and there

Goitre.

is hardly one Muhammadan out of three in the water-logged areas who is not troubled by one form or other of skin ailment.

In Jamālpur subdivision and in Sadar along the foot of the hills goitre is extremely common. It hardly occurs in the south or east of the district and it is not impossible that drinking water eventually derived from hill streams has something to do with this disease. It has been attributed to drinking the stagnant water of bad ring wells, but such wells are not confined to the Jamālpur subdivision and the sandy foundations of these wells must and does provide far purer and cooler water than the rivers and tanks, which are the chief source of supply in the south of Tangāil and in Kishorganj.

Water-supply.

Ring wells can be sunk to a depth of 15 or 20 feet for Rs. 18 and the cost is even less if the soil is hard, as in that case the well is merely a hole in the earth with two or three rings at the top to prevent the edges breaking in. It is strange that the use of these wells is on the whole restricted to such local limits. In many villages in Jamālpur every *bāri* has its own, and there are sufficient in the Madhupur jungle and the less sandy *thānās* to show that, if the potters had more enterprise, these wells could be successfully spread over many other areas. The *pukka* wells which the District Board puts up in favoured places cost Rs. 600 or more, and are not always successful in providing good drinking water at once. Few of the rivers and *khāls*, on which the people of the central *thānās* depend, have sufficient current to be safe in the winter months, and few of the tanks, which in Netrokona and Tangāil are the chief source of supply, are sufficiently preserved. Fishing, bathing and the washing of clothes goes on in all.

Apart from the *bils*, which occur in all the subdivisions at frequent intervals, when once the floods subside, the district as a whole dries up with wonderful speed. To the absence of any water-logged areas in the sense that Jessore and Rājshāhi are water-logged, and the sandy nature of much of its soil, the district owes its comparative immunity from malaria. But the rapidity with which the streams dry up in the cold weather makes the problem of water-supply more serious, and it is really dysentery and the kindred bowel complaints that cause the greatest drain on the vitality of the people.

In the first 20 years of the District Board great strides were made in the medical facilities of the district. Between 1883 and 1903 the number of dispensaries rose from 15 to 32, the number of beds from 36 to 135, the number of indoor patients from 353 to 2,290 and the number of outdoor patients from

32,418 to 374,065. The same rate of progress has not been maintained since 1903, though the number of outdoor patients treated in 1914 was 549,412. The number of operations has remained practically the same, 12,514 instead of 11,327.

The total income of the dispensaries is now Rs. 86,498, of which about one-third comes from public subscriptions and the rest from Government, the Municipalities and the District Board. On the whole the dispensaries are well distributed throughout the district, but there are many villages 30 miles from any dispensary and it stands to reason that many cases of the more serious diseases never come within their statistics at all. Patients who are seriously ill cannot be carried long distances in narrow cages hung on a bamboo, and all but the very poor have an insuperable objection to becoming inpatients of a hospital. Medical practitioners are to be found in many of the larger villages, but their qualifications are very low, and the better diffusion of properly qualified doctors as well as the systematic improvement of the water-supply are the most crying needs of the district.

The towns of Mymensingh are not of sufficient importance to merit special attention in this chapter. In 1869 the Civil Surgeon recommended the transfer of the head-quarters of the district to Subarnakhāli or Jamālpur on the ground that a *char* having formed in the Brahmaputra just above their bungalows the officials were always getting ill. The drainage has always been a difficulty as the river bank is very much higher than the general level of the streets, and all the drains run into the *bils* on the south, instead of into the river. When therefore the *bils* are full, there is no drainage at all. On the whole, however, Mymensingh shares with the rest of the district quite a fair reputation for healthiness and its death-rate per mille is only 9·16 as opposed to 20·27 in Jamālpur and 19·37 in Tangāil. Mosquitoes are very bad in the cold weather months, there having been a great change for the worse in this respect during the last five years, but the *anopheles* is rare. Rāmgopālpur, Jamālpur and Kishorganj are also bad for mosquitoes, but in most mofussil camps during the cold weather, even in the Tangāil subdivision, there is little risk or discomfort in sleeping without a net.

All the subdivisional head-quarters are now provided with Lady Doctors or Midwives. A new hospital is being built in Mymensingh itself at an estimated cost of over 2 lakhs, which promises to be a model institution for the Province.

CHAPTER V.

AGRICULTURE.

THE Settlement records show that 2,747,000 acres of the district are cultivated, or 4,292 out of 6,300 square miles. The Madhupur jungle takes up about 420 square miles, but of this 126 square miles are *bails* sown with paddy, or *chala* lands sown with jute, mustard, or other crops. Rivers and *bils* account for 732 square miles, homesteads for 395 square miles and roads for 85. The other uncultivated areas are chiefly grass and scrub jungle in the Fulpur, Durgapur and Khāliajuri thanas, which are under water too many months of the year for any crop to grow. Cultivation has increased and is increasing rapidly, with the result that the limit will very soon be reached. In 1872 Reynolds calculated that out of 6,464 miles 230 were river and *bil* and 890 jungle, only 3,562 were cultivated.

Soil.

The principal soils to be found in the district are (*i*) the red soil of the Madhupur jungle, which is very rich in iron and lime, but deficient in clay. When dry it is as hard as stone and very porous. (*ii*) The almost pure sand of the Brahmaputra and Jamuna *chars*. Those that have even the thinnest coating of silt grow excellent jute. (*iii*) The rich clay of the rest of the district, which derives its fertility from decaying vegetation and flood alluvion. This varies not in kind, but only in degree, according to its stiffness, from the comparatively dry areas of Jafarshāhi and Alāpsingh to the huge *haors* in which *boro* paddy is grown. In some parts the clods are so hard that no ploughing will break them up, and the hammer has to be requisitioned. From Kishorganj eastwards, however, one shower is sufficient to change the fields from baked clay into liquid mud.

1,446 square miles, or 34 per cent. of the culturable land of the district, regularly bears two crops, and there are many villages where the best lands give quite good crops of rice, jute, and mustard in one and the same agricultural year.

The climate is on the whole good. The rainfall is probably better distributed than in any part of the tropics. Two or three wet days are the rule rather than the exception even in December, January and February, and in March there are constant showers, especially in the afternoons. April and May often have as many rainy days as June and August, and the bright sun blazing through the exceptionally humid atmosphere affords ideal conditions for the growth of the main crops. A real famine, or even a serious scarcity, is almost impossible over a wide area.

Compared with rice, the staple food crop, and jute, all the other crops of Mymensingh shrink into insignificance. Rice is divided into three main groups according to the season of the year at which it is grown. The most important is *āman* or the winter harvest of paddy which is sown in all the low lands of the district in July and August. Sometimes it is sown broadcast, but more usually it is transplanted from seedling beds called *jālā*, which are prepared on the higher lands of the village banked up with *ails* of earth, so as to retain all the moisture of the earlier showers. As the seedlings need not be transplanted till they are 8 inches or a foot high, the cultivators can wait for the transplantation till the *aus* or jute has been cut and the first heavy rains have enabled the fields to be ploughed up into a foot or more of liquid mud. The plant has an extraordinary power of growth and can shoot up a foot in 24 hours. It is never spoilt by standing in too much water, so long as it can keep pace with the inundation, and it requires no weeding.

The cultivators of this district go in for over 60 varieties of *āman* paddy, being guided in their choice of seeds by the height of the land. For lands on which *aus* or jute have already been harvested, one of the *bhadra māshi* or long stalked quick-growing varieties has to be used. The varieties grown on land which produces *āman* only are classified as *asari*. *Bāwā* paddy is much coarser than the transplanted varieties, and it has the disadvantage of occupying the fields for a full 10 months. On the other hand it requires no labour.

Transplanted *āman* is called *rowā* and that sown broadcast *bāwā dhān*.

Area in acres under each crop according to Settlement records :-

Jute	...	...	...	...	...	555,400.
<i>Āman</i>	...	...	...	...	...	1,490,700.
<i>Aus</i>	...	...	...	...	...	754,500.
<i>Boro</i>	...	...	...	...	...	190,600.
Oilsseeds	...	...	...	...	...	309,700.
Sugarcane	...	...	...	...	...	3,405.
Pulses	...	...	...	...	...	77,238.

Aman is grown in the sandy villages of the Jamālpur subdivision, on all the level plains of the Sadar and Tangāil and Netrokona subdivisions and in all the *bils* throughout the district which are not in the habit of going more than 6 feet under water in August and September. It is also the only crop in the serpentine strips of level low land, which are to be found throughout the Madhupur jungle and are known as *baid*. It gives a better outturn than *āus*, which the richer people avoid as being indigestible. It is less coarse and more palatable than *boro* paddy which, however, returns a heavier yield.

Aus paddy has also many varieties and is sown at the same time as jute, as soon as the first rains of March and April allow the land to be thoroughly ploughed. *Aus* requires a lower standard of fertility in the soil than jute, so in many parts, where there is not sufficient manure, it is substituted for jute in alternate years. To a great extent the ryot is influenced by the state of his own granary. If he has not enough *āman* to last his family till December he devotes a certain portion of his holding to *āus* to prevent the necessity of buying rice at an outside market between July and December.

Aus is perhaps chiefly grown in the Jamālpur and Tangāil subdivisions. In Kishorganj and Netrakona a larger proportion of jute is grown, and also the fields there are flooded earlier in the year. For this reason in the Kishorganj subdivision *āus* and *āman* are sometimes sown broad cast together, so that if one does not succeed the other does. Under favourable conditions a half crop of *āus* and a three-quarter crop of *āman* are got in this way. The *āus* thus sown is called *bowāli* and ripens a month earlier than the ordinary *āus*.

Boro paddy is grown in *bils*, which are too deep in water in the rains to allow of any crop at all. As soon as a *bil* begins to dry up in November and December, its sides are planted with seedlings grown in September and October on any adjacent dry spot, and the transplanted area is gradually extended till the whole *bil* is filled up. The *bils* dry so rapidly during the cold weather that a lot of irrigation is needed and the process of irrigating and transplanting may go on beyond the end of February. In areas liable to flood as early as April or May, the harvesters stay out in the fields day and night, and some of the crop is always cut before it is ripe. Apart from irrigation and protection from *kālem* and other birds, which often do considerable damage, *boro* paddy involves little labour, as the minimum of ploughing and no weeding is required. The seedling

beds, however, require at least four ploughings and levellings. The seeds are soaked in water for 24 hours and encouraged to germinate before they are thrown on to the plaster of wet earth.

The yield may be as much as 45 maunds an acre. Allowing Re. 1-2 as the cost of each day's ploughing and 8 annas as the cost of one man's labour in weeding, thrashing, etc., the profit of *boro* cultivation per acre is probably about Rs. 65 as opposed to Rs. 45 from *āman* and Rs. 18 from *āus*. On a similar calculation, taking 16 maunds as the outturn and the price Rs. 8 a maund, the profit on jute is about Rs. 66 an acre.

Boro paddy is the main crop in all the eastern thanas of the district, Barhatta, Khāliajuri, Badla and Bājītpur. It is extremely common in the lower parts of the Tangāil subdivision and in the deep circular *bils* of the Gafargāon thana, whose hilly basins show that they are really a part of the Madhupur jungle. There is very little *boro* paddy in Jamālpur or Sadar.

Kāon in its early stages may easily be mistaken for paddy. It is often the first crop grown on pure sand in new *chars* of the Brāhmaputra.

Cheena is another millet grown in Dewānganj, Sārisābāri, Tangāil, and Bājītpur. The outturn is not more than 8 maunds an acre. It is a precarious crop which tells heavily on the soil and the outturn is not worth more than Rs. 24 an acre. A little wheat and a little barley are grown in Dewānganj and Sārisābāri thānās and there are a few fields of *arhar* (the pigeon pea) in Sherpur.

The area under jute according to the Settlement statistics Jute. was 555,400 acres. These are not the figures for one year, but they agree fairly well with the figures reported by the Director of Agriculture for the year 1914, viz., 587,620. With an average yield of 15 maunds an acre it means that some 620 lakhs come into the district in a good year for jute alone. The plant is usually called *nalia* and the fibre *pāt* or *koshṭā* by the villagers. The best jute is grown on the *char* land of the Brāhmaputra and other smaller rivers where a sandy foundation has been enriched by the alluvial deposits of successive floods. The average outturn is not less than 15 maunds an acre.

The higher the land, the better the jute, is a general maxim for this district. In years, when the April rains are above normal, the plants are spoiled by water continually standing on their roots, and the cultivators may plough up the crop and

Profits of
cultiva-
tion.

substitute *āus* paddy. When the plants are 5 or 4 feet high standing water is less harmful and in many parts of the district they are cut when under 2 to 4 feet of water, but except in Tangāil this is the exception and not the rule. In Sadar, Jamālpur and Netrakona the jute can be cut with dry feet and often the difficulty is to find tanks or rivers within reasonable distance for steeping purposes.

The time of cutting depends very much on the market price at well as on the weather. Some fields are cut early in June, but if rain is deficient in July and there is no hurry about transplanting the *aman* crop, or if steeping places are not readily available, then any number of fields are left standing till the end of August. The cultivators take no trouble about the selection of seed, so a small field here and there is always left for this purpose. The retting takes from 8 to 15 days, and the colour and quality of the jute depends very much on the kind of water used. The bundles of jute are arranged like rafts and weighted down with plantain stalks and mud. Then the bark or fibre is separated by hand from the pipe of sap inside, and beaten in the water. It is dried on bamboo rails and the favourite scene for this operation, like the former, is only too commonly the public road and bridges.

The ryots do up their jute into rough bundles according to the amount they wish to sell or can convey to market at one time. Good jute should be 10 feet long and have the colour and glossiness of pale natural silk.

The botanical species most widely grown in this district is the *Corchorus capsularis*. Commercially the varieties are known by place names, e.g., Serājganj, Narāyānganj, Uttarārja and the only classification is according to quality.

Indigo is not grown at all. Jute began to take its place as early as 1830, but was not seriously cultivated till 1850. The period of the most rapid increase was from 1892 to 1907. It is probable that the limit of cultivation has been reached, and it would be better for the inhabitants if they kept enough area under rice to supply themselves with the whole of their annual consumption. The collapse of prices in 1914 due to the war does not, however, seem to have seriously reduced the area under jute. *Aman* and *boro* paddy, on which the people mainly depend for their food, grow at different seasons, and *āus* is the only alternative to jute in the spring months. If more jute were grown the cattle would suffer from the absence of straw, which is their only fodder during the seasons of flood, and there would be a scarcity of steeping-places.

From April to December almost every field bears its rice or jute crop. In the cold weather there is more variety, and in some parts the land really has a rest. Mustard is perhaps the commonest winter crop in all the higher villages. In the centre and east of the district the *āman* paddy is cut when the soil is too dry and hard for any new crop to be planted before April, and it is chiefly the *āus* and jute lands, which are not low enough for two crops of rice, on which mustard, *til* (*sesamum*), onions, sweet potatoes, peas, radishes and pulses like *māshkalāi* and *khesāri* are grown. *Tissi* (linseed) and the pulses are most common in Tangāil. *Sunn* or hemp is another favourite crop in Jamālpur and the northern parts of Tangāil. It is not grown for the fibre, but either as manure or to feed the cattle. Its brilliant yellow flower mixed with the pale yellow of the mustard and the blue of the *tissi* affords a striking change from the general dullness which marks the Alāpsingh and Kishorganj villages at the same season of the year.

Sugarcane gives a splendid return, but its cultivation is confined to very small areas. It takes a whole year to grow, and this is why it is not more extensively patronised. The chief centres are Islāmpur, Dewānganj, Kendua, Tangāil, Madhupur in Nandāil, Iswarganj and Hosenpur. Seedlings, 12,000 or more to the acre, are planted in lines 36 inches apart at intervals of 20 inches. The seedlings are taken from cuttings consisting of two joints which have been half buried in a horizontal position in a well watered bed. Plenty of manure is required and at least eight ploughings.

Cotton is only grown in the Madhupur jungle and the outskirts of the Gāro Hills. The cotton of the *simul* tree, which grows everywhere, is not collected.

Tobacco, chillies, and various vegetables are grown round every *bāri* throughout the district, but only in small plots. Cucumbers, pineapples and English potatoes might be more generally cultivated than they are, but they are cheap in all bazārs. A popular and most paying crop in Nandāil and Katiādi and Sārisabāri are the giant radishes which are sold at every *hāt* in December and January.

Melons are extensively grown by up-country coolies on the sand banks of the Brāhmaputra in January and February. Indian-corn grows very well from April to July, but the Bengali cultivators do not seem to care for it and like tomatoes, peas, beans and other English vegetables it is chiefly grown in Mymensingh for the benefit of the European residents. There is an agricultural farm at Narundi, which stands alone in

Winter crops.

Vege-tables.

trying to oust the Dacca market gardeners in providing cauliflowers and cabbages for the table. Plantain trees are common everywhere, and in most *thānās* every substantial *bāri* has its own *supāri* (betelnut) and coconut palms, mango and jack fruit trees. The latter are most prolific and yield an enormous weight of fruit. During the season when the ordinary villager has little else to dispose of, the basket which he carries to the *hāt* on his head will seldom contain more than two of this gigantic fruit. Mangoes do not grow well, being blown unripe from the trees or spoiled by various insect pests.

Pān or betel-vine is grown all over the district in small patches, principally where the villages are old and close together, as in the thickly populated neighbourhoods of Islāmpur, Keshjāni, Nandāil, Purbadhala and Jangalbāri. The young creepers are planted in straight lines and have to be carefully surrounded with walls and roofing of split bamboos and jute sticks to protect them from the sun, the rain, the wind and the cattle. Really good soil is required and the landlords often demand a heavy rent for the *pān baraj*. It takes a year for the plant to reach maturity, but after that the leaves can be plucked all months of the year. Two thousand cuttings go to an acre, and the yield is estimated at 70 lakhs of leaves. With the extension of cultivation thatching grass has also become a valuable crop. All lands left *patit* for two or three years will gradually develop *ulu* (*saccharum*) shoots and then, if the cattle are kept off, grass suitable for thatching will grow to a height of 5 or 7 feet. Some varieties which are not of much use for roofing make excellent fodder for cattle. The Madhupur jungle grows a valuable grass known as *kāolā*.

The sturdy *jhāo* or tamarisk bushes, which grow on all *chars* soon after they have reformed, are only useful for fodder and fuel. The reeds from which *sitalpati* mats are made grow at the side of the district board road between Kālihati and Ichapur as also here and there in Kishorganj.

Manure.

The crops which depend most on manure like tobacco, sugarcane, and chillies, are grown near homesteads, where owing to the thickness of the population and the multitude of cattle and goats natural manure is never wanting. Even jute grows highest and thickest in the homestead plots. In the outside fields artificial manure like oilcake is only applied to *pān* plantations, but cowdung and ashes and aquatic weeds are often distributed in small heaps on fields where jute is going to be sown. In villages where straw is not particularly valuable the rice is cut high and the stalks are burnt some